



Division

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Section

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Short sermons
on important subjects

Second edition
with additions.

J. Edmonson

Newcastle
C. Chester

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P R E F A C E.

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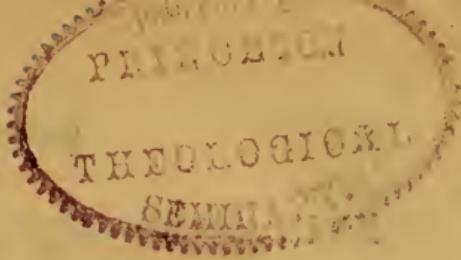
MANY pious people, engaged in the active duties of life, have neither time to read, nor money to purchase large books. With a view to relieve them in both these respects, the following short Sermons are published.

Long Sermons are generally tiresome, and seldom do good either to readers or hearers. The Author of these Sermons has been employed in the work of the ministry more than *twenty four years*, and has always found that short Sermons are both more useful and more acceptable than long ones.

It may be objected that these are too short : to this the Author replies, first, that each short Sermon in this work is intended to contain the substance of a long Sermon ; and, secondly, that the design of a Sermon, in his judgment, should be rather to open the way for people to think for themselves, than to exhaust the subject by long illustrations.

In this edition, ten Sermons are added, and a few alterations are made in the phraseology of those which were published before. The rapid sale of the former edition, and the very favourable opinion of many judicious friends, induce the Author to hope that he has not laboured altogether in vain.

Should this feeble attempt to convey religious instruction, prove a blessing to any one, God shall have the praise. The author does not court popular applause. His highest ambition, he trusts, is to **DO GOOD.**



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THE
ORIGINAL STATE OF MAN.

SERMON I.

GEN. i. 27.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.

THE works of God are beautiful in their appearances, regular in their motions, and useful in their various operations. To contemplate them frequently is both an important duty, and a source of great delight. *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.* Psal. cxii. 2, 4.

The first chapter of Genesis, out of which we have taken our text, contains a short account of creation in general, and of man in particular. The solemnity with which man was

created, proves that he was designed to fill an important place in the newly-created world. **A COUNCIL** was held. *Let us, said God, make man in our image; so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.*

Our text teaches two things : first, that God created man ; and secondly, that he created him in his own image.

I. GOD CREATED MAN.

Creation, or giving being to that which did not exist before, implies such amazing wisdom and power as far exceeds our narrow comprehension. That man could not create himself is *certain*. It is equally *certain* that the angels, however highly exalted, could not create him ; for they themselves are but creatures. The self-existent God, whose wisdom is infinite, and whose power is unlimited, is the creator of man. Other beings, whether in heaven or on earth, are but of yesterday. They had a beginning ; but God is from everlasting. He received life from none ; but gave life to all. The propagation of man is a very different thing. God has given him, in common with various other beings, a power to propagate his own species ; but if we trace propagation back as far as imagination can carry us, we must come at length to

a first pair, formed by an *Almighty hand*. The sacred scriptures place this subject in a clear light, informing us that man is a creature, and that the God of heaven and earth, who made all things by the word of his power, is his **CREATOR**.

Hence we learn that man is absolutely dependant upon God—that he should be humble, giving God the glory of all his varied powers—that he should love, honour, and obey God—that every power, both of his body and mind, should be employed in that way which infinite wisdom may direct. Had he done so, from the beginning, he might have relied on the goodness of God for a supply of all his wants. A kind Providence would have watched over him for good: he would have been safely protected in every hour of danger; and would have enjoyed a large portion of substantial happiness, which might have been continued to him, through every period of his existence.

II. GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE.

Many erroneous opinions have been maintained on man's primitive state. Some have placed him on a level with, if not above, the angels of God; and others have placed him below many of his descendants. To avoid these wide

extremes, we must abide by reason and revelation.

The image of God does not refer to the body of man, which was formed of the dust; for God is a spirit, and cannot be represented by any material form. Hence Moses said to Israel, *Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female.* Deut. iv. 15, 16.

That man resembled God, both in the spirituality and immortality of his nature, and in the freedom of his choice, is generally admitted; but as the scriptures do not refer to these things, when they speak of man bearing the image of God, to enlarge upon them is unnecessary.

An image is the representation, or likeness, of any person or thing. Man was an image, representation, or likeness of God in authority—in knowledge—in righteousness—and in true holiness.

Immediately after the creation of man, God gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, and

over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Gen. i. 28. In this extensive authority, man represented God who ruleth over all. The sovereign of the universe made him the sovereign of this lower world. The inferior creatures were not made capable either of knowing, fearing, loving, or serving God ; but were placed under man, that they might know, fear, love, and serve him. They looked up to man as their governor, and man looked up to the Lord of Hosts as his governor. In this instance amazing honour was conferred upon human nature. Man was Lord of all the earth, and representative of heaven ! Every fish of the sea, every fowl of the air, and every beast of the field was required to obey him, and this was to continue as long as he continued obedient to his God. Well might the Psalmist say, *Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.* Psal. viii. 5.

Man, the governor of this lower world, bore the image of God in *knowledge*. God is the wisest being in the universe ; and man endowed with reason, and taught by revelation, was the wisest being on earth. There seems to be an allusion to this in what the Apostle Paul says of the new man, *Renewed in knowledge*,

after the image of him that created him. Col. iii. 10. What degree of knowledge man possessed, in his primitive state; we cannot exactly determine. It is probable, that he had clear and extensive views of the being, works, and attributes of God—that he understood his own precise situation, both as a subject of God, and as governor of the world—that he understood the duties which he owed to God his governor—that he knew the properties and dispositions of the creatures which he had to govern—and that he was well acquainted with the happiness which would result to him from the right performance of various duties, both to God above, and to the creatures below him. Less than this we cannot suppose, and more than this we need not insist upon.

God, the universal governor, is righteous in all his proceedings. *Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* Psal. xcvi. 2. Man, in this respect, was an image of his God. He had those righteous dispositions planted in his nature, which always produce a righteous conduct. While he retained these dispositions he could not be cruel to the creatures. It is reasonable to suppose that they rejoiced and were happy under his equitable sway. It has been objected, that righteousness

in man was no part of the divine image, because the word frequently signifies a just and righteous conduct. But, can there be a righteous conduct without a righteous principle? It was the just and equitable principle, resembling the eternal rectitude of the divine nature, that constituted the righteousness of the first man. To this the apostle Paul refers, where he says, *The new man which after God is created in righteousness.* Eph. iv. 24. Solomon also bears ample testimony to this important truth: *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright.* Eccles. vii. 29.

But, the principal part of the divine image in man, was, *true holiness.* Eph. iv. 24. His soul and body, which include the whole man, were holy. There was no spot of pollution upon him. He had no sinful propensity—no inclination to any thing that was wrong. He loved God with all his heart. God was the centre of his soul. He could say, what an inspired writer afterwards said, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* Psal. lxxiii. 25. Evil was unknown to him even in theory. He was good, yea, his whole nature was *very good.* From the purity of his nature, he was led to every thing that was lovely in his conduct. In

that state of innocence every duty was delightful. Had man remained in that state, the pure worship of God would have been established amongst his descendants. Men would have resembled angels, and earth would have resembled heaven.

We may certainly infer that man was completely *happy* in his primitive state. There was nothing to make him unhappy. All without was beautiful, and all within was pure. God delighted in him—the creatures paid him homage—the earth produced every tree that was pleasant to the eye and good for food. O lovely Eden, where innocence and happiness grew up together! Within thy sacred enclosure there was no *sorrow*—no *pain*—no *crying*—no *death*!

The original state of man reflects the highest honour upon God. Here we behold an astonishing display of divine wisdom, power, goodness, purity, and love. If the glory be departed, let man bear the blame—let him be ashamed—let him be punished, for the awful change took place through his transgression. God intended him to continue as he made him. He gave him power to stand, but left him free to fall.

There is another Eden far above the skies, where human nature is exalted to a state of in-

conceivable perfection. The subtle Tempter has no access to that delightful paradise. There the spirits of the just are *confirmed* in a state of everlasting happiness and glory. Jesus, the second Adam—the Lord from heaven, dwells amongst them ; and it would be as easy to shake the throne of God, as to disturb or interrupt their felicity. God has crowned them with immortality, and their happiness and glory will continue as long as eternal ages roll.

Every man on earth should bend his course to that happy world. The way to it is open and plain. All may enter in at the strait-gate, and walk in the narrow-way which leads to life. God graciously invites us to it, and condescendingly affords us all the help we need. May we accept of the invitation before it be too late, and gratefully avail ourselves of the aids of divine grace! If any man on earth deserve the name of fool, it is that man who neglects his interests in that better world. Let us now be wise unto salvation! Let us devote our hearts and lives to God, that we may know and enjoy him as our God, both in time and in eternity. To him be glory forever. *Amen.*

THE
PRESENT STATE OF MAN.

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SERMON II.
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Isa. liii. 6.

All we like sheep have gone astray.

MAN did not long continue in a state of innocence. Tempted and overcome by the wicked one, he broke the law of his God, and brought ruin both upon himself and his posterity. We, his offspring, have followed his sad example ; and, from our youth up even until now, *all we like sheep have gone astray.*

Let us consider wherein men have gone astray from God ; the dreadful effects which have followed ; and, conclude with some advice to wretched wanderers.

I. WHEREIN HAVE MEN GONE ASTRAY FROM GOD ?

All men have gone astray in their *thoughts*. They *have forgotten God that formed them*. Deut. xxxii. 18. They forget his being and perfections, his presence, and providence : they forget his goodness, his mercy, his truth ; they forget their dependence upon him, and the high obligations they are under to love, honour, and obey him : they forget his justice, his threatenings, and his fixed purposes to punish sin. They think about eating and drinking, dress and company, amusements and pleasures, riches and honours ; but better and more important things seldom find place in their mind. Sometimes, perhaps, an alarming providence, or an awakening sermon may lead them to reflect for a moment ; but, alas, how soon do their thoughts wander again on the vanities and follies of human life ! Before the flood, *God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* Gen. vi. 5.

The *affections* of men have strayed from God. He whom they are bound to love supremely, is hated. They hate his government and laws, his worship and people. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* Rom. viii. 7.

Men are given up *to vile affections.* Rom. i. 26. They *love the world, and the things that are in the world,* but *the love of the Father is not in them.* 1 John ii. 15. Nothing, I think, can be a stronger proof that men are fallen from God than the state of their affections. They feel no interest in divine things. Their souls are wholly in the world. There is their treasure, and there are their hearts. They may feel fear and terror when death and eternity are presented to their view ; but they are destitute of that love which is the essence of genuine religion.

Men have gone astray from God *in their conversation.* This necessarily follows, for, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* Matt. xii. 34. The thoughts and affections, being *corrupt,* the conversation must needs be *corrupt.* Men converse freely and frequently about the world ; but God is not named, except in profane oaths, curses, and blasphemies. *Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips : whose mouth is full of cursing, and bitterness.* Rom. iii. 13, 14. Modern politeness may not admit of oaths, curses, and blasphemies, in common conversation ; but it sub-

stitutes nothing that is in reality much better. Were we to go through the most polished and refined circles of the rich and great, we should hear but little either of God or Christ, of heaven or hell, except what is said on these important subjects in the way of scorn and contempt.

It necessarily follows that men have strayed from God *in their conduct*. They stray from the paths of piety, justice, mercy, and truth; and were it not for human laws, it would be difficult to calculate the number of horrid crimes which they would commit. In short, they are proud, self-willed, covetous, cruel, and full of deceit. There is not one sacred command of God which they do not break, not one promise which they do not neglect, not one threatening which they do not despise.

II. THE DREADFUL EFFECTS WHICH HAVE FOLLOWED.

By wandering from God, men have justly provoked his *wrath* against them. How can they enjoy his favour, while they trample his laws under their feet? *God is angry with the wicked every day.* Psal. vii. 11. His *wrath abideth upon* unbelievers. John iii. 36. This is a most alarming consideration, enough, one

would think, to terrify the most hardened wretch. We fear the anger of man, if he have power over us ; but what is that when compared with the anger of God? At his presence *the mountains quake, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned ; yea, the world and all that dwell therein.* Nahum i. 5. Sinner, how wilt thou stand before him? When he ariseth in judgment, what will become of thee? I tremble for thee ! O that thou wouldest tremble for thyself !

Having chosen darkness, the *light* of heaven is *withdrawn* from men. The true knowledge of God is nearly lost. *For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.* Isa. lx. 2. How little do men know either of themselves, of God, or of Christ! How astonishingly ignorant are they both of the nature and design of pure religion! They understand arts and sciences, trade and commerce, and whatever else belongs to this perishing world. On these subjects they converse rationally ; but when religion is the subject of conversation, we evidently perceive they are in the dark. *Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools.* Rom. i. 22. This is the case both with

heathens, jews, mahomedans, and nominal christians: they are all strangers to God and vital godliness, till the light of the gospel shine upon them.

In this state of darkness, real *happiness is lost*. Men talk about happiness—they expect it in ten thousand objects, but find it in none. Sin and misery, holiness and happiness, are inseparable companions. The soul of man, separated from God, cannot be happy. No created object can satisfy its large desires. Never, then, let us expect happiness in wandering from God. We can find it only in returning to him, and in being made partakers of the divine nature: for, *there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* Isa. xlviii. 22.

Wandering from God has produced *misery*. Men are mortal, and they feel a thousand pains in consequence of their mortality. *The body is dead because of sin.* Rom. viii. 10. Some linger in pain year after year; others are hurried away suddenly by the plague, by fire, by famine, and by war. They are scourged by the elements, and destroyed by the beasts of the field. Their days are *few and full of trouble*. They are made miserable by the depravity of

their nature: anger, wrath, hatred, and malice, often burn within them like the fire of hell; and, in some degree, are like the torments of hell. When these raging, tormenting passions are still, others frequently succeed of a very painful description; such as fretfulness, discontentment, murmuring, and complaining. Reflection upon the past gives pain, and fears of the future create distress, to him who wanders from the right way.

Great punishments await those who wander from God. They wander till they fall into the pit. Their way leads directly to it. *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.* Psal. ix. 17. In that place of horror are felt all the dreadful effects of wandering from God. Oh that we may never know them by experience !

III. ADVICE TO THE WRETCHED WANDERERS.

Seriously consider your present state. You have forsaken God your maker—you have, perhaps, no desire to return—you have no power of yourselves to return—nor have you the means of returning, unless God in great mercy afford those means. But what reason have you

to hope for mercy ? Will he seek you—will he receive you, after all you have done to provoke him ? Often ask yourselves, how will these things end ? You think God is merciful, and your thoughts are right. He delights in mercy: but will he have mercy on you while you continue to offend ? How can you hope for happiness, while every sin you commit plunges you deeper into misery ? Think how hateful sin is to God, and how destructive it has been to men.

Earnestly seek salvation by Jesus Christ. *He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.* Luke xix. 10. Draw nigh to God through him. Pray for mercy, and for grace to help in time of need. Do not delay a moment. *Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.* 2 Cor. vi. 2.

By returning to God, you will regain his favour. Divine light will once more shine upon your understandings. Lost happiness will be recovered, and you will escape all those future miseries which now threaten you. Lay this subject to heart. It is a subject of infinite importance. What do you gain in the path of sin ? When did you enjoy a happy day ? May you now return and live, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE
MEDIATION OF CHRIST.

.....
SERMON III.
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1 Tim. ii. 5.

*There is one God, and one mediator between God
and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

THAT sinful men cannot be saved without a mediator, is one of the most obvious truths of holy writ. God, who is transcendently holy, will not suffer men to approach him in their own name; but in the name of Jesus they may draw near with humble confidence, for he is their mediator. *There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Let us consider the character of our Mediator—his mediatorial work—and the happy consequences of his mediation.

I. THE CHARACTER OF OUR MEDIATOR.

The name of our mediator is called *Wonderful*; and every thing which is said of him by the inspired writers is *wonderful*. Having two natures, the divine and human, he stands nearly related both to God and man. He is the *beloved Son of God*, and the *despised Son of Man*. Without *form or comeliness* in his human nature; but in his divine, *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*. Heb. i. 3. The word was *God*, and the word was made *flesh*. This is a deep mystery which the human mind cannot fathom, but which we are bound to believe on the authority of inspiration. We cannot explain it, because it far exceeds the limits of our contracted understandings. The best method for us to take, is to give full credit to that which God has revealed, without either attempting to pry into hidden secrets, or to explain that which is inexplicable. Had all men adopted this plan, many painful disputes, in the christian world, would never have been known; and the real character of our blessed Mediator would have been maintained on scrip-

tural principles. For my part, I see nothing in the union of Godhead and manhood, in the person of Christ, *contrary* to reason; and he who objects merely because it is *above* reason, must, to be consistent with himself, object to every part of God's creation.

The *wisdom* of our Mediator exceeds all our conceptions. Peter said to him, *Lord thou knowest all things.* John xxi. 17. And the apostle Paul informs us, that in him *are hid all the treasures of wisdom.* Col. ii. 3. He is perfectly acquainted with our sinfulness, weakness, frailty, and temptations, and with the best methods of delivering us from all these evils; so that we may safely depend upon him as an infallible guide to heavenly glory.

His *power* is equal to his wisdom. He made and preserves the world: *For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things, consist.* Col. i. 16, 17. This power, blessed be God, is employed in saving a lost world. Well might the apostle to the Hebrews say,

He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. Heb. vii. 25. Let us commit ourselves wholly to him, remembering that he is *able* to keep that which we commit unto him against that day—that great decisive day, which will determine the everlasting state of all mankind.

Our mediator is perfectly *holy*. *Such an high priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.* Heb. vii. 26. On this account sinners can have no union with him till they are saved from their sins. In reference to this, the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, *Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins.* Matt. i. 21.

Christ our mediator is full of *compassion* for the human race ; yet, such is his regard for the honour of God, that he will not save them who obstinately live and die in sin. Possessed both of divinity and humanity, he regards the one as much as the other ; and it is as much his plan to secure the divine glory as it is to save the world. This should never be forgotten, lest, while we view his unbounded love, we should indulge ourselves in those things which will ever be hateful in his sight.

These things, duly considered, lead us to conclude that he is in every respect a fit person to mediate between God and men. Have we to do with God? He is God. Are we men? He is man. Are we ignorant? He is wise. Are we weak? He is strong. Are we polluted? He is pure. Are we miserable? He is compassionate.—Let us now proceed to consider

II. HIS MEDIATORIAL WORK.

Our Lord as Mediator *fulfilled the law*, and made it honourable. His obedience was perfect. In all his works the precepts of the law shone peculiarly bright. Every command appeared in its native beauty and grandeur; and the world beheld what God designed man to be at first, and what he actually was while he remained in a state of innocence. The following prophecy was remarkably accomplished in his holy conduct: *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake: he will magnify the law and make it honorable.* Isa. xlii. 21.

By his death *he made atonement for sin*. Man was guilty and condemned. God required satisfaction; and a sacrifice of great value must be offered up before guilt could be removed.

No sacrifice was of sufficient value but that of Christ. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. They were offered up to God, under the ceremonial law, as types of the great Redeemer, who had mercifully undertaken to atone for sin ; and they directed the Jewish church to him, as the only foundation of hope to man. In the fulness of time Messiah came, and *suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*—*He was wounded for our transgressions.* Isa. liii. 5. *He redeemed us by his blood.* Rev. v. 9. *He tasted death for every man.* Heb. ii. 9.

By his resurrection *he conquered death, and opened the grave.* The sentence pronounced upon man when he first went astray, was, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* Gen. iii. 19. But, by the resurrection of Christ, a way is opened to a blessed immortality. Death yielded to his superior power, and the dreary grave was opened. What cause of thankfulness to us ! What glorious prospects are before us ! We also shall arise from the dead, and *heaven will be our final home !*

Before his ascension *he appointed a gospel ministry.* Chosen men were sent out into all

the world, to preach the gospel to every creature. Having fulfilled their mission, they died, and others were raised up to fill their place ; and able ministers will be raised up by Jesus as long as the ministry shall be necessary. The men whom he chuses are not always furnished with vast stores of human learning ; but what is far more important, they possess the spirit of their divine Master. With zeal and perseverance they warn men of danger, and direct them to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. By their instrumentality sinners are awakened, mourners are comforted, believers are established, and backsliders are restored to the favour and image of God.

After the ascension of our mediator into heaven, *he sent the Holy Spirit* down to carry on his gracious designs towards the children of men. The influences of the Holy Spirit are either extraordinary or ordinary. On the day of Pentecost he communicated extraordinary gifts to the holy apostles, to qualify them for an extraordinary work ; but those gifts were not continued long. There are other ordinary gifts of the Spirit which are communicated to all men in all ages, because they are absolutely necessary to salvation. Without his sacred influences we have neither inclination nor power

to return to God. He enlightens, that we may repent—he quickens, that we may live to God—he cleanses, that we may be happy. To deny these influences and operations upon the the human heart, is to deny all genuine religion. That which is not the work of the Spirit of God should not bear this sacred name.

Our blessed Mediator ever lives to make *intercession*. He appears for us in the presence of God, and pleads the merit of his death. It is on this ground alone that a sinful world is not destroyed. When a guilty sinner returns to God, Jesus pleads for pardon and peace ; when a poor tempted and afflicted saint looks up, he pleads for delivering grace. Through him the choicest blessings of heaven are sent down upon us ; and through him our prayers, praises, and duties ascend, and meet with divine acceptance.—We shall now hasten to the last thing proposed

III. THE HAPPY CONSEQUENCES OF HIS MEDIATION.

By his mediation *God is glorified*. The plan of mediation will reflect everlasting honour upon God, because it both secures his glory, and the happiness of his creatures. Here we

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see all the attributes of Deity graciously employed, and sweetly harmonized in the salvation of men. Justice is satisfied, truth is vindicated, purity is displayed, the channels of mercy are opened ; and both the wisdom and power of God are made manifest in the contrivance and execution of this wondrous plan.

A sufficient remedy is provided for guilty man. His guilt may be pardoned ; he may be reconciled to God ; his nature may be cleansed ; and lost happiness may be fully recovered. Shall we, then, refuse this remedy ? Are we determined to perish in our sins ? God forbid ! Blessed be the Lord for offering salvation to us upon gospel terms ! O may we accept his offered mercy, and live for ever !

A way is opened into the kingdom of *glory* by the mediation of Christ. The vilest sinner upon earth may become a glorious saint in heaven. The crown of glory—the palm of victory are freely offered ; for the grand design of Christ, in all his undertakings, has been to *bring many sons unto glory*. Heb. ii. 10. Lord grant that we may be of the happy number !

Upon the whole, let us unite in praising God

for the gift of his Son : let us love the Lord Jesus in sincerity : let us thankfully accept the gracious offers of the gospel, and follow on to know the Lord. Hereafter may we join all the glorified saints in heaven, in singing the following song of praise to our Redeemer : *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* Rev. v. 12. Amen.

THE
NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.

.....
SERMON IV.
.....

LUKE xiii. 5.

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

THE greatest sufferers in this world, are not always the greatest sinners. We have clear proofs of this, both in the case of Job, and in the two cases mentioned in the preceding verses. *Suppose ye*, says Christ, *that those Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

From these words we shall consider what is implied in repentance: and then prove the certainty of perishing without repentance.

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN REPENTANCE ?

True repentance implies a knowledge of sin—a sorrow for it—a turning from it—and a turning to God.

True repentance implies *a knowledge of sin*. A man sees no need of repentance till he sees himself a sinner. *I came not, says Christ, to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Mark ii. 17. A thoughtless sinner, ignorant of himself, imagines all is well, when, perhaps, a cloud of divine vengeance is ready to burst upon his devoted head. We see this illustrated in the common affairs of life, in which a man sees no need of repentance, till he is convinced of some impropriety in his conduct. Thinking his whole conduct right, he goes from one error to another, till ruin comes upon him as an *armed man*. The true penitent before God, is fully awakened from the sleep of sin. With open eyes he sees what the law requires, and wherein he has deviated from its holy precepts, both in heart and life, and he humbly acknowledges himself guilty. Viewing the law on one

hand, and his conduct on the other, his sins appear more numerous than the hairs of his head. He did not before conceive himself guilty of so many crimes. With his eyes partly opened, he thought he had sinned only in a few instances; but he is now fully convinced that his whole life has been sinful—that his best works have come short of God's requirements—and that he deserves to suffer all those dreadful punishments, which God has threatened in his holy word.

Hence follows *a sorrow for sin*. A sight of sin is so grievous and distressing, that it leads the penitent to weep and mourn bitterly: like Peter, when he reflected upon his base conduct towards his Master. Sin is now a heavy burden, which the penitent can neither bear nor remove; and it remains upon him day and night. He often cries out, *O wretched man that I am!* Rom. vii. 24. No sorrow is like his sorrow. *The spirit of man will sustain his infirmity: but a wounded spirit who can bear?* Prov. xviii. 14. With this wounded spirit he sighs and groans as one without hope. Many think he is going mad; but it is certain he is becoming wise. Thoughtless men direct him to company, amusement, and sensual plea-

sure, as the best cure of melancholy and dejection ; but wise and good men direct him to a throne of grace. Ask him the cause of his sorrow. Does he give you the answer of a madman ? No : he says, *I have sinned against the best of beings : I have destroyed myself : I am under a curse : and, continuing in my present state, hell will be my portion !*

The next thing in repentance is *a turning from sin*. Sin now appears hateful. The penitent abhors and detests it, and flees from it as from the face of a serpent. God has said, *Let the wicked forsake his way.* Isa. iv. 7. The penitent obeys this command. He quits at once both sin and sinful companions, resolving never more to offend a holy God. We do not suppose he has absolute power over sin at present ; but he endeavours to conquer it. Death appears less dreadful to him than sin ; and he had rather die than yield to its baneful influences. If this be not the case, he is not a sincere penitent. He may profess it before men ; but God, who sees the heart, will not approve. It is an easy thing to deceive men, and we may deceive ourselves ; but God cannot be deceived. We never read of a penitent, in the word of God, who did not forsake all his evil ways. The

thing, indeed, will speak for itself. What we pursue we love. We cannot pursue sin without a love for it; and if we love and pursue it, how can we be said to repent?

Another important part of repentance is *a turning to God. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.* Lam. iii. 40. The penitent returns with a humble, broken, contrite heart, confessing his sins to God. He comes as the publican in the temple, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Luke xviii. 13. The justice of God appears dreadful: but there is hope in his mercy. The penitent goes boldly to a throne of grace, through Jesus his mediator and advocate. He seeks the Lord in all the means of grace, and joins himself to the people of God. He returns in his affections, desiring God above all things. He returns to his duty, saying, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. Such a one is not far from the kingdom of God. His sorrow will soon be turned into joy. The gloomy, dismal state of penitence, will vanish as clouds and darkness before the rising sun; and the glorious Sun of Righteousness will arise upon him with healing in his wings.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF PERISHING WITHOUT REPENTANCE.

It must be allowed that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. *They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one.* Psal. xiv. 3. What an awful picture of human nature! Every soul of man is guilty before God! Some may be less guilty than others; but if we select the best men upon earth, and survey their whole conduct, we shall discover many sins both of omission, and of commission.

Every sin which men have committed *must either be pardoned or punished.* Sinful man must fall either into the hand of justice or of mercy. This is a necessary consequence of our probationary state. God has placed us here in a state of awful trial for eternity, and we must soon appear before a righteous Judge, to give an account of the deeds done in the body. If our sins be not remitted, the Judge must condemn our souls to everlasting fire.

Pardon cannot be obtained without *repentance.* Impenitent sinners persevere in sin, and harden their hearts against God. Every day increases their guilt. They neither see nor feel a need

of pardon. In this wretched state they neglect all the means which God has appointed for their salvation. *A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and are punished.* Prov. xxii. 3. Who can blame God for punishing such men? Would it be right for the King of heaven, to pardon hardened rebels with weapons in their hands?

It must follow then, that *those who neglect repentance will perish.* They will perish body and soul for ever. Sinner, be alarmed! Tremble before God! He will not be mocked. *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Gal. vi. 7. God gives thee space to repent; but it will soon end. In a future world thou wilt find no place for repentance. Dost thou laugh at the mourning penitent? Remember, it is better to weep and mourn now, than to weep and mourn in the torments of hell. The damned would give a thousand worlds for thy opportunity. Remember, their dreadful state will soon be thine, unless thou repent.

The jews were often warned; but they slighted warning. The blood of the Galileans shed by Pilate, and the falling of the tower in Siloam, were awful emblems of that destruction

which came upon them when the Romans besieged Jerusalem. In that memorable siege, if we are to credit Josephus, their own historian, *eleven hundred thousand* perished! Their towers fell—their temple was burned—their city was destroyed—and those who survived the dreadful scene were taken captives, to return no more to their beloved land. Their wretched descendants are still scattered over the nations; nor will they ever return without true repentance, and an acknowledgment that *Jesus* is the *Christ*. Thus in the end of the world the terrible judgments of God will overtake and overwhelm impenitent sinners. *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

1 Thess. v. 3.

I shall conclude in the words of Peter to his deluded countrymen: *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.* Acts iii. 19.

DANIEL
IN THE DEN OF LIONS.

.....

SERMON V.

.....

DAN. vi. 16.

Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions.

THOSE who live in the habitual neglect of prayer, should carefully study the character of Daniel. Neither disgrace, nor danger, nor death, could deter him from the discharge of this sacred duty. Those who, like him, are in the daily habit of prayer, may take encouragement, by his example, to persevere to the end.

In this account there are three things: Daniel was cast into the den of lions—the

Lord preserved him there—remarkable circumstances followed.

I. DANIEL WAS CAST INTO THE DEN OF LIONS.

When we read that the king commanded Daniel to be cast into the lions' den, it is natural to enquire, What evil had he done? Had he offended the king? Had he injured any man? Such a punishment should not have been inflicted without some previous crime. A candid examination of this affair will prove that Daniel was not cast into the lions' den as a guilty criminal, but as an injured, persecuted man. Let us examine this short, but highly interesting history,

Daniel, previous to this occurrence, had been highly *exalted* by Darius. He was *preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him: and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.* Ver. 3. The place which he filled was honourable and important. It seldom happens that good men rise high in worldly greatness. Their honours are more *substantial and durable* than any which the world can give. But, when it happens so, providence has some important purposes in

view. At the same time it must be allowed, that it would be a general blessing, if men of great talents and deep piety, were placed at the head of national affairs. The monarch who has such counsellors is happy, and the people are blessed. *When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice : but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.* Prov. xxix, 2.

But those who are highly exalted, may look for the *envy* of wicked men. High places are slippery, and those who fill them are exposed to danger. Who then, but fools, would envy the great? They are real objects of pity. No means are left untried either to blast their character, or to destroy their lives. Envy plans, and malice frequently effects their overthrow. Those who sighed for Daniel's honours, sought his destruction. The public good, with them, was no object. Private interest was the prevailing principle of their hearts. This is frequently the case both with public characters, and private individuals. Could we see the secret springs of human conduct, the scriptural account of man's depravity would be as evident as his existence. Our hearts, by nature, are *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* Jer. xvii. 9.

The enemies of Daniel *laid a dangerous snare* for his ruin. To make that snare more effectual, it was proposed under the artful pretence of paying peculiar honour to the king. Daniel was devout. Day by day he offered up petitions to the King of kings. His enemies knew this, and, after various other plans of mischief, said, *We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.* ver. 5. Happy the man whose bitterest enemies can find no other fault with him, than that which relates to the strict observance of the laws of his God! Conjecturing, from the well known character of Daniel, that he would persevere in the duty of prayer, his enemies proposed *to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.* ver. 7. Accordingly, the unsuspecting king, feeling himself highly flattered, *signed the writing and the decree.*

When Daniel knew that *the writing was signed*, he went to his house, and with his windows open towards Jerusalem, kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he did afore-

time. He fully understood the diabolical plan of his enemies, and that his life was in danger; but duty appeared more important to him than personal safety. He might have prayed more privately; but was a stranger to that temporizing disposition, which makes religion bend to every change of circumstance. Duty was his delight. The honour of his God was his first object, and to him all worldly considerations were lighter than dust in the balance. That no man should make an ostentatious show of devotion, we readily admit; but every man should be firm in the discharge of this important duty, in such a way as may best promote his own happiness, and the glory of God. No danger, however great, should deter us from those important addresses to God, on which our happiness so much depends. Consequences may be safely left, while we tread in the path of duty. This above all should be regarded, and the rest may be left to him who *ruleth over all.*

II. THE LORD PRESERVED DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.

The king soon discovers the envious designs of Daniel's enemies, and was troubled at his own folly. He sought to deliver Daniel; but the laws of the *Medes* and *Persians* altered not.

It was not, therefore, in his power to deliver his favourite servant. *Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep went from him.* Ver. 18. But Daniel was safe. He served the King of kings, who is never at a loss for means to preserve his faithful servants. Neither men nor devils can do them harm. Every one of them can confidently say, *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Psal. xxvii. 1.

When Daniel was cast into the den, *the Lord sent an angel to stop the mouths of the lions.* Those ferocious animals were put under the controul of an invisible messenger. In this instance a mighty miracle was wrought. What a proof that Daniel was beloved in heaven! What a proof that God both hears and answers prayer! Accompanied by the angel, Daniel was as safe in the den as if he had been in the palace of Darius. The way of duty ever was, and ever will be, the way of safety. While we walk in that way we are perfectly safe in all places, and in all circumstances. *Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?* 1 Pet. iii. 13.

How differently did Daniel spend that night to Darius and his courtiers. Daniel was happy and safe in the den, and probably engaged in prayer and praise. Darius was mourning his folly when it was too late. The courtiers, probably were drinking wine, laughing at the weakness of the king, and triumphing over Daniel. *But the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.* Job xx. 5. A dreadful storm was preparing for the wicked courtiers, from which they could not escape. How well it is for men to consider the end of their actions ! *The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces: out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth.* 1 Sam. ii. 10.

We cannot pass through this world without being exposed to danger; but, by the grace of God, we may proceed without wilful sin. If we live in wilful sin, we cannot hope for the protection of God; but if we keep a conscience void of offence, we may claim his guardian care. God delivered the Apostle Paul *out of the mouth of the lion.* Nero was more like a *roaring lion* than a human being; but he could not hurt or destroy without divine permission. The same power which protected Daniel in the

den of lions, and the Apostle Paul in the mouth of the lion, will protect all good men, even in the common dangers and afflictions of life; and, when greater dangers and afflictions appear, the goodness and the power of God will be All-sufficient. *The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.* Nahum i. 7.

III. REMARKABLE CIRCUMSTANCES FOLLOWED.

Darius had expressly said to Daniel, *Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.* Ver. 16. Whether this prediction arose from his own reflections, or was suggested by the spirit of God, is not certain; but early in the morning, with a mixture of hope and fear, the king went in haste to the den of lions, and cried with a lamentable voice, *O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?* Daniel answered from the bottom of the den, *O king, live for ever! My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lion's mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.* Ver. 21, 22. Finding Daniel safe, the king was exceeding glad,

and commanded that they should take him up out of the den. The dark cloud which had hung over Daniel's head, was now dispersed, and light and glory shone upon him. Thus all the saints of God, will rise above this world of clouds and darkness, to a world of light and glory.

The deliverance of Daniel was followed by the destruction of his enemies. *The king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives : and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they reached the bottom of the den.* Ver. 24. When Daniel left the den, the protecting angel went away. How quickly was the dark iniquity of those men followed by dreadful punishment! The punishment of other sinners, delayed by the interposition of mercy, is not less certain. Whatever infidels assert to the contrary, *Evil shall slay the wicked; and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.* Psal. xxxiv. 21. But why did the wives and children of Daniel's accusers share their punishment? Perhaps they had been concerned in their crimes. If not, their bodies might be suffered to perish as a warning to

others. It is a dangerous thing to be related to, or even connected with, wicked families. In temporal judgments, even tender infants, belonging to the wicked, do not always escape ; but, in a future world, none but the personally wicked shall suffer. *There the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son : the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.* Ezek. xviii. 20.

That which led to the ruin of Daniel's enemies, terminated in the honour of Daniel's God. *King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth ; peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel : for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even to the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.* Ver. 25—27.. What sublime sentiments ! Perhaps they were dictated by Daniel. God, no doubt, intended by this means to bring the nations back to him-

self; and had they improved this happy circumstance, they might have enjoyed the light of his reconciled countenance. We need not wonder at the little good that followed this decree, when we consider how few were brought to God by Jesus Christ. It might then be said, as was afterwards by our Lord to the hardened Jews, *ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* John. v. 40. Are we not in the same case? God has used various and important means to bring us to himself, and yet we live in sin.

One circumstance in this account we must not forget to notice. It is said of Daniel, *no manner of hurt was found upon him because he believed his God.* The Apostle refers to this when speaking of the old Testament saints, he says, *by faith they stopped the mouths of lions.* Without faith there can be no religion. It is that principle which produces both love and obedience. God rewarded Daniel's faith by preserving him in the den of lions. An imitation of his faith and obedience, will prove the only way to peace and safety. The God of Daniel is the God of every believer.

T H E

**HEBREW CHILDREN IN THE
FIERY-FURNACE.**

.....

SERMON VI.

.....

DAN. iii. 23.

*And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and
Abednego, fell down bound into the midst
of the burning Fiery-Furnace.*

THE history of the Jews, contained in the old Testament, furnishes many remarkable instances of the weakness and absurdity of idolatry. It was frequently supported by dreadful persecutions. Our text relates a circumstance of cruel persecution, by *Nebuchadnezzar*, in support of idol worship, but it was over ruled

by Jehovah, both for the good of his servants, and for the *glory* of his own NAME. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were cast into a burning *fiery-furnace*; but the God, whom they served, delivered them.

We shall consider why the three children were cast into the fiery-furnace—What happened while they were there—and what followed after.

I. WHY WERE THE THREE CHILDREN CAST INTO THE FIERY-FURNACE.

Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps out of the spoils of the Jewish wars, made an *image of gold*, which he set up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Upon what occasion that image was set up, is not easy to determine. Some suppose it was in honour of *Bel*, the God which the Babylonians worshipped; but it is more probable that Nebuchadnezzar set it up in honour of himself. This is not to be wondered at, when we consider the unbounded pride of some ancient monarchs. *Alexander* pretended to be the son of *Jupiter Olympius*; and though he affected to hate flattery, yet wished his subjects to pay him divine honours. The size of the golden image, perhaps intended to represent the greatness of *Nebuchadnezzar*, was

prodigious. Its height was threescore cubits, and its breadth six cubits, which, according to our measurement, is ninety feet high, and nine feet broad. The pedestal, probably, is included in the height ; for otherwise it would have been a most disproportionate figure. But why was the image placed so high ? Probably that the worshippers who were very numerous, might all behold the object of their devotion.

That senseless image was set up to be *worshipped*, by a vast assembly, from every part of the Empire. Every one in the assembly, was commanded to fall down, with religious reverence, at the sound of certain musical instruments. No rational arguments were offered why they should worship such a god. The command of the king, was all the authority they had ; and, no doubt, it was deemed sufficient, by the ignorant multitude. That the king's command was highly unreasonable, must appear evident to every man of reflection ; but superstition, in all ages, bends the pliant mind of ignorant men to every kind of absurdity. Image worship is not only absurd, but exceedingly wicked. An image can neither see nor hear, nor taste nor smell. Its existence, as an image, depends upon its maker. But what an

insult to the Majesty of heaven, to pay divine honours to human workmanship! Thereby God, who made all things, is robbed of his glory; and the stupid idolator is exposed to dreadful punishment.

All the pious jews held idolatry in the utmost *abhorrence*. Influenced by this spirit, the three children refused to obey the *impious* command of Nebuchadnezzar. Death, in one of its most frightful forms, was not so dreadful to them as the abominable sin of idolatry. The wrath of the king, though like a *roaring lion*, could not terrify them into a sinful compliance. The raging fire, in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, was not so much to be feared as the punishment which the Lord has prepared for his enemies in a future world. The three children had every thing to risk that was dear to man. Their exalted situation in the Empire—their rising prospects of future greatness—and life itself, were to be given up in case of disobedience. But what were all these things when compared with their duty to the **ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD**? The man who will not give up all, when God requires it, does not deserve a name amongst the pious.

The whole deportment of the three children

upon that memorable occasion, was such as did them honour. They reasoned like men—they displayed the genuine spirit of piety—and they were steadfast and unmoveable in the discharge of duty. How worthy of our imitation ! We learn from this instance, that the greatest potentates upon earth should be disobeyed, when their commands clash with those of the Lord God Omnipotent. Nebuchadnezzar was a great monarch, but he was ignorant, proud, passionate, and cruel. The same may be said, of the Jewish rulers, who threatened Peter and John ; and the holy Apostles, in a powerful appeal to the judgment of their persecutors, manifested a disposition similar to that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They said, *whether it be right, in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.* Acts iv. 19. Thus let every pious man acquit himself, when the honour of God, and the prosperity of pure religion, render it necessary. It is better to die a painful death with a good conscience, than to live a life of ease and honour with a conscience, which, by its constant accusations, becomes a perpetual source of torment.

What we admire in the three children, had a very different effect upon *Nebuchadnezzar*. His

ungoverned passions raged almost to madness, To see three poor captives, whom he had raised to exalted stations in the Empire, set his command at defiance—to see them pay divine honours to a God, whose people he had triumphantly led into captivity, was more than he could bear. Princes are too often flattered by hosts of hypocritical, selfish knaves; but truly pious men neither *give* nor *receive* flattery. They pay due respect to superiors, and especially to lawful monarchs; but neither rewards nor punishments can induce them to depart from that strict integrity, and circumspect conduct, which God requires. *Nebuchadnezzar* had full proof of this in the three children. When he heard of their refusal to worship the *golden image*, he commanded them to appear before him—enquired if they had refused to serve his gods—offered to pardon what was past, if, at the sound of the musical instruments, they would fall down and worship the image—threatened them, in case of refusal, with immediate destruction—and blasphemously intimated that no God could deliver them out of his hands. At that critical moment the three children were fairly put to the test. All was at stake, but, confiding in the Lord their God, they replied with calm heroic fortitude, *O Ne-*

buchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery-furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Ver. 16—18.

II. WHAT HAPPENED WHILE THE THREE CHILDREN WERE IN THE FIERY-FURNACE.

The *mighty men*, who cast the three children into the fiery-furnace, *were consumed* by the raging flames. This was a most marvellous circumstance. It has been conjectured that on the descent of the angel the fire was driven out as with a violent blast of wind. The destruction of the mighty men, and the preservation of the three children, astonished *Nebuchadnezzar*. He rose up in haste—went to the furnace—and enquired of his counsellors if three men were not cast bound into the midst of the fire—declared that he saw four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, unhurt—and that the form of the fourth was like the *son of God*.

Who this son of God was, whether an angel,

as he is called in another part of this narrative, or the **MESSENDER OF THE COVENANT**, is a point which cannot be determined with certainty. Angels, who often appeared upon solemn occasions, in ancient times, are called *sons of God*. The word *angel* signifies a *Messenger*; and the Messiah is represented as the Lord's Messenger in the following prophecy : *Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me : and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.* Mal. iii. 1. When we consider the grandeur and importance of this miracle, we must admit that it was a work worthy of *the only begotten of the Father*.

God, who made the world, in this instance, suspended the natural power of fire. To him this was easy. All the elements are under his control. By him winds blow, and thunders roar. The raging fire, and the great deep obey his word. The three children, under his guardian care suffered no harm. Their cloathes did not even smell of fire. They were cheered by the presence of the *Son of God*. How pleasant it is to reflect, that the *Holy one of Israel* is still present with his suffering saints. To eu-

courage them in difficult duties, and in painful sufferings, he says, *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and when through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, for I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel, thy Saviour.* Isa. xliii. 2, 3.

Well might *Nebuchadnezzar* be astonished at every circumstance of this wonderful event. He had, upon a former remarkable occurence, confessed to *Daniel*, *of a truth it is that your God is a God of Gods, and a Lord of Kings.* Dan. ii. 47. Now he saw the omnipotent power of God displayed, in an unparalleled miracle. His proud and angry threatenings, and the boasted power of his god proved vain. *Bel*, his god, has been supposed to represent the *sun*. If so, how evidently was that system of idolatry confounded! The sun, that vast body of fire, plainly appeared subject to the will of Israel's God. Good men should never forget that all nature is subject to the word of God. This sentiment will inspire them with courage, when storms of affliction threaten their ruin.

Nebuchadnezzar, astonished and confound-

ed, acknowledged **THE MOST HIGH GOD**, and called the three children his servants. Before he had presumptuously said, *who is the God that will deliver you out of my hand?* Now, in the presence of his counsellors he calls them forth; and they obey him. How wonderfully the scene changed! How highly were the servants of God honoured! The bitterness of death was past! Thus all who serve God shall be honoured. They may not be honoured in the present world; but in the future they shall be honoured far beyond all calculation. Let us constantly obey God, and we shall be brought forth out of all our *fiery trials*, purified and refined like gold in the furnace.

III. WHAT FOLLOWED AFTER!

Idolatry was confounded, and its advocates were *silenced*. In the presence of a great concourse of people, from every part of the then known world, the *power* of Jehovah, and the *impotency* of idols, were awfully displayed. By this means the fame of Jehovah was likely to spread to the ends of the earth. Had those who saw the miracle upon the plain of Dura, and those who heard the report in distant nations, followed the light which then shone with such uncommon lustre, idolatry would have been

ruined forever; but, alas, deep rooted prejudices, violent passions, and temporal interests, too frequently smother the understanding, and put out the light of heaven !

The servants of the Lord, who had steadily followed the sacred dictates of an enlightened conscience, were *honoured before all the people*. God put honour upon them in a way which glorified himself. Their preservation in the fire displayed, on the one hand, the glory of God, and on the other, the high esteem in which they were held by him. What greater honour could have been put upon them than for the God of heaven to exert his omnipotent power in their preservation ? Nebuchadnezzar also honoured them, by confessing the true God, whom they served. But how contemptible must *Bel*—the *golden image*—and *Nebuchadnezzar* have appeared in the eyes of the people ! Let us often reflect that God will be glorified both in the honour which he will put upon his people, and in the contempt which he will pour upon his enemies !

The idolatrous Nebuchadnezzar was constrained to *bless the God* of the three children. At the same time he made the following de-

cree : *That every people, nation and language which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dung-hill: because there is no God that can deliver after this sort.* Dan. iii. 29. How far this decree was observed is another matter. Men do not always follow the precepts of wisdom. The subsequent history of the jews proves that the heathens soon forgot this wonderful event.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were *immediately promoted in the empire.* Consistency with our profession always turns up to some good account. The world may frown, and, for a time, reflect upon the best of men ; but a steady conduct will bear down every prejudice, and in the end force the vilest persecutors to reverence the wise and good.

We may infer from this account that idols are vanity—that piety should be kept up in the most imminent danger—that the wrath of man cannot prevail against the power of God —that persecution will be over ruled for the good of God’s cause—and that God should be honoured by all the earth. *Amen.*

PRAYER IN AFFLICITION.

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SERMON VII.

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JAMES V. 13.

Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.

EVERY state and condition of life has its peculiar duty; and, to use a common phrase, *that man acts in character* who performs the duty which his peculiar state requires. Our text refers to a suffering state; and recommends the afflicted to engage in the duty of prayer. *Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.*

Here are two things: first, an enquiry, *Is any among you afflicted?* and secondly, a direction, *Let him pray.*

I. IS ANY AMONG YOU AFFLICTED?

It is seldom that we are all *afflicted*. Though human life abounds with trouble, yet, blessed be God, there are pleasing intervals of sweet repose ; wherein the mind is not only calm and tranquil, but inexpressibly happy. No wave of sorrow rolls over the peaceful breast. The body is free from pain, and the mind is free from all distraction. Providence smiles, and we abound with food and raiment, and every other necessary comfort. All our affairs are, in every respect, agreeable to our wishes. Heaven and earth conspire to make us blessed. Heaven shines upon us, and all nature looks gay. We enter our habitations in peace. We go out and come in, in the fear of the Lord ; and all things evidently work together for our good. This state, however, may not continue long.

Hence we proceed to remark, that there are but few families, cities, or religious assemblies, where we might not find *some* in a state of affliction. While one is rejoicing, another is mourning : one drinks the cup of consolation, and another the bitter cup of sorrow. One is racked with violent and tormenting pain, so that life becomes an intolerable burden : another is afflicted with poverty and want : another mourns

the loss of a dear friend or near relation, whom his eyes shall see no more in the land of the living: another is afflicted with thoughtless and disobedient children, of whom he has no hope either as to this world or that which is to come: another is weighed down with a load of guilt, which creates dreadful fears of future punishment: another suffers by the persecuting spirit of such as should be his companions in the way to Zion: another is in heaviness through manifold temptation: another is vexed in his righteous soul at the wickedness of the wicked: and another is kept in painful bondage through the fear of death. The monarch on his throne, the honourable statesman, the wise counsellor, the valiant soldier, the upright judge, the laborious husbandman, and the poor cottager, all know by sad experience that man is born to trouble. Even pure religion does not exempt men from affliction; for *many are the afflictions of the righteous.* Psal. xxxiv. 19.

When a minister of religion goes into a family, let him enquire, Is any among you afflicted? When he mixes with company, though they may put on a cheerful countenance, let him ask, Is any among you afflicted? When

he ascends the sacred pulpit, let him look upon his numerous and mixed hearers, and put the question, Is any among you afflicted? And when he writes to the saints, as James in this epistle, let him make the enquiry, Is any among you afflicted? Then let him earnestly recommend the duty of prayer. This leads to the second part of our subject—

II. LET HIM PRAY.

We must carefully guard against mistakes in explaining the holy scriptures. This passage, misunderstood, may lead to a dangerous error; namely, that prayer is never necessary but in affliction. Some men seem to understand it so, for they never pray but when they are afflicted. This important duty must be performed at other times; but it is peculiarly necessary when the spirit is weighed down in affliction. Our afflictions are often of such a nature that none can remove them but God. They baffle human skill, and set at defiance the feeble powers of man. Let us then apply to God, whose wisdom, power, and goodness, extend to all the sons of men; and who can deliver out of the deepest afflictions, to which human nature is subject.

Prayer in affliction implies a deep sense of our impotence ; an acknowledgment of God's power ; and an humble dependence upon him for help. It abases the creature ; but exalts the Creator. These considerations discover the *fitness* of this duty on the one hand, and on the other, the probability of success, if we pray in a right spirit. We shall now point out some things for which we should pray when we feel the heavy hand of affliction :

The afflicted should pray for *pardon*. Perhaps some crime may be the cause of our suffering, which must be pardoned before we can obtain deliverance. Some sins are unto death ; and God forbids our prayer : But God has said, *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* 1 John v. 16. When David was afflicted, in the matter of Uriah, he put up the following prayer : *Make me to hear joy and gladness : that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.* Psal. li. 8, 9. The apostle James gives direction on this subject in the following words : *Is any sick among you ? Let him call for the elders of the church ; and let them pray over him,*

anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. James v. 14, 15.

In affliction we should pray for *counsel*. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* James i. 5. We never need the counsel of God so much as in affliction. While clouds of thick darkness roll round us, we know not which way to go; but when we acknowledge God in the duty of prayer, he directs our steps. It is a source of pleasing consolation to be able to say with the Psalmist, *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.* Psal. lxxiii. 24. No counsel is so safe as that of the Lord; and it is fully sufficient in all ages. *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.* Psal. xxxiii. 11,

We should pray for divine *support* in our afflictions. We are weak and feeble; but God is strong. He has promised to help; let us plead his promise. *I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, fear not;*

I will help thee. Isa. xli. 13. By waiting upon God, in the duty of prayer, we renew our strength; and mount up as on the wings of eagles. Thus strengthened; we have nothing to fear; for as our day is, so is our strength. The apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and he besought the Lord that it might be removed; but the Lord said, *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* 2 Cor. xii. 9:

We should pray for a *sanctified use* of affliction. When affliction is sanctified, it promotes our good, the good of others, and the glory of God. God neither afflicts in vain, nor willingly grieves the children of men. *Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.* Psal. cxix. 67. After an affliction is over, it is pleasing to reflect, that like silver in the furnace, we have lost nothing but dross. In this way, and for this very end, God often afflicts his children. *Thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.* Psal. lxvi. 10, 11. Prayer for a sanctified use of affliction, being accompanied with those dispositions which incline us to improve it to the best of purposes, we may as-

sure ourselves, that the over-ruling providence of God will make it a blessing. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord.* James v. 11.

It is not unlawful in our afflictions to pray for *deliverance*. When the Israelites in the wilderness wandered in a solitary way, and found no city to dwell in: when their soul fainted with hunger and thirst, *Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.* Psal. cvii. 6. But when we pray for deliverance, we must pray with resignation. The time must be left to God, who knows best how long it may be necessary to continue an affliction. Our prayers should be wisely adapted to the different cases which occur. When a case is clear, we may ask in full confidence; but when it is doubtful, we should say, *If it be thy will.* Prayer for deliverance from affliction should always be expressed in humble, modest, and submissive language.

A man in affliction should request others to join with him in prayer. United petitions are powerful. *If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall*

be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. Matt. xviii. 19. The prayers of saints ascend before the throne of God like *holy incense*, and speedy answers are sent down. Hasten, then, to call in the pious ; and set great value upon their prayers. Even Simon, the sorcerer, when threatened with the judgments of God, said to the apostles, *Pray to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.* Acts viii. 24.

But prayer in affliction, does not set aside *the use of other means.* Every means that prudence may dictate, should be used on these occasions ; but all should be mixed with prayer, that God may give his blessing, without which all our endeavours will prove useless.

We are encouraged to pray in affliction by *the example* of wise and good men in the days of old. They applied to the best of friends. Their first thoughts, in every calamity, were turned to God. The ignorant mariners, when threatened with a watery grave, prayed to their gods ; and they exhorted Jonah to call upon his God, that they might not perish.

A disposition to pray to an invisible power, in times of trouble, *is common to all men.* This

will appear evidently to every one who examines sacred and prophane history. Many dark heathens, in the frequency, fervency, and perseverance of their prayers to idols, shame us who are called christians. It is high time for us to learn and practise devotion. But let us be careful, while we engage in this necessary and important duty, not to provoke the Lord, by offering up the prayers of wickedness, to punish us more severely.

The *character* of the divine Being is an encouragement to pray in affliction. He is full of compassion, and waits to do his needy creatures good. He pities men in their troubles, and his arm is stretched out to help and deliver. *Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to them that call upon thee.* Psal. lxxxvi. 5.

It is awful to see a man plunged into deep affliction *without a desire to pray*. It sometimes happens (let us think upon it with horror) that men curse God in affliction; but they are like devils and damned spirits. O beware of a murmuring spirit, lest thou shouldst be hardened to such a degree as to curse God and look upwards! In which awful case, there could be but little hope of thy salvation.

A MESSAGE FROM GOD,

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SERMON VIII.

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ISAIAH iii, 10, 11.

Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him : for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked: it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

THE world may be divided into two classes; the righteous and the wicked. The righteous are the friends of God; the wicked are his enemies. Ministers, who are God's messengers, are commanded to comfort and encourage the righteous; but to denounce woes and threatenings to the wicked.

Our text contains two parts: first, it shall be well with the righteous; secondly, it shall be ill with the wicked.

I. IT SHALL BE WELL WITH THE RIGHTEOUS.

A righteous man *believes* what God has revealed, and *obeys* what God has commanded. *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness—But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.* James ii. 20,—23.

It shall be well with the righteous *in this world*. Outward circumstances may be unpromising; but the inward state of his mind is *well*. He has omniscience to direct him, omnipotence to protect him, and infinite fulness to supply his wants. God is present with him as a *cloud* by day, and as a *pillar of fire* by night. Is he poor? He can trust in God. Is he rich? His riches are sanctified, and enable him to do good. Is he in pain? He knows it will work for good, otherwise his heavenly Fa-

ther would not have permitted it to come upon him. Do men despise him? He knows God sets a great value upon him, and looks down with complacency. It is well with him in times of public danger. The sword may go through the land; but he is safe. The plague may rage; but he fears no danger. Earthquakes may shake the ground; but he stands firm on the Rock of Ages. Famine may prevail; but his bread is sure, and his water shall not fail. Thus he lives: but how does he die? When death approaches all is well. His work is done, and he lies down in peace. God is with him, and he fears no evil. Holy angels stand around his bed, and wait to conduct him to his Father's house. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.* Psal. cxvi. 15. O the calmness, the sweetness of a dying saint! He would not exchange his situation with the proudest monarch on earth. The world has nothing to court his stay: heaven has every thing that his soul desires. Well might Balaam say, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* Numb. xxiii. 10. Death is the end of this life, and then another life begins.

But it shall be well with the righteous *in the*

world to come. They shall eat the fruit of their doings. This is a figure borrowed from husbandry. The husbandman breaks up his ground, sows his seed, and watches over it with constant care. He labours hard ; and meets with many discouragements. Perhaps the seasons may be unfriendly, the fowls of the air, or the beasts of the field may visit his inclosure, and noxious weeds may spring up in abundance; but he waits for the harvest, when all his labour and care meet with a full reward. He gathers his corn, he makes his bread, and eats the fruit of his doings. This life is a seed time. *Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.* Gal. vi. 7. We sow with labour and care ; but the harvest comes, and we eat the fruit of our doing. God will reward the righteous. They do not deserve what he will give ; but he is gracious. The reward will not be of debt, but of grace. God has promised, and he is faithful. We claim no merit, but our claim to the reward is as good as if we had all the merit to which some pretend.

Look forward, ye righteous, with joyful hope! You may sow in tears, but ye shall reap in joy. You may go forth sorrowing, but ye shall return rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you. Think nothing of your toils, and pains, and la-

hours. Heaven will recompense the just. Only be faithful to the end. Turn not aside from the holy commandment. Prize your present privileges; and prize your future hopes. Never exchange them for any thing that this world can give. If it were to give you all it has, you would be infinite losers by the exchange. You would exchange solid happiness for vanity and disappointment: you would exchange a heaven of glory, for a hell of pain and shame!

II. IT SHALL BE ILL WITH THE WICKED.

Wickedness is either secret or open. All are wicked by nature; but some endeavour to conceal it, and others glory in their shame. The wicked, who conceal their wickedness, are abhorred of God, and the openly wicked are abhorred both of God and man. It shall be ill with both. The woes of God belong to each, and will be poured out upon them at a future period.

Were we to judge by external appearances, this passage would be difficult to explain. David says, *I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like the green bay-tree.* Psal. xxxvii. 35. In prosperity they are merry, they laugh, they sing, they dance; but

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there is a worm within which preys upon their vitals. We must form our judgment of men rather by their inward feelings, than their outward appearance.

Woes are pronounced against them by the God of heaven, at whose word hell quakes and devils tremble. Woe to them in prosperity! God is against them. Their pleasures are mingled with poison; their riches are a snare and temptation; and their honours lead to disgrace. Woe to them in adversity! God and men forsake them. To whom will they turn in days of darkness and distress? Woe to them when they reflect! They cannot bear their own reflections. Conscience, which should be a guide, becomes a plague. Woe to them when the judgments of God are abroad! They cannot escape. *How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.* Psal. lxxiii. 19. Woe to them in the hour of death! They turn their pale faces to the wall, and die without hope. A heavy burden of guilt weighs them down, and they sink like lead in deep waters. Woe to them in the next world; for *the labour of their hands shall be given them.* They have laboured in the work of iniquity, and their reward shall be given in full weight and measure. Their

works shall follow and overtake them in a future world.

Recollect the character of God who pronounces these woes. *God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.* Nahum i. 2. He bears long, and is not willing that any should perish; but when he ariseth in judgment, we shall find *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* Heb. x. 31. But, is there no hope? Is there no remedy? Yes, blessed be God, who waiteth to be gracious! It is in the power of man to prevent these woes. He may obtain mercy. There is a friend in heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who pleads for guilty man. Hear his call: *Look unto me, all the ends of the earth, and be ye saved; for I am the Lord.* Isa. xlv. 22. The time will come when there will be no remedy. *He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* Prov. xxix. 1. Secure, then, the present moment. Return to your God. Humble yourselves before him, and he will enable you to say, *O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.* Isa. xii. 1.

The messengers of God should be faithful in pronouncing these sacred truths! They should comfort the people of God, and hold up their hands. One qualification necessary for a bishop, or one who oversees the church of Christ, is, that he be *a lover of good men*. Show your love by helping them on their way. Be not afraid of the wicked. Whether they will hear or forbear, pronounce God's word! They may curse, but God will bless. They may frown, but God will smile. They may threaten, but God will guard you on every side. They may charge you with ignorance, rudeness, and cruelty; but you are only accountable to God, and while he approves, you will prosper. Thus when your mission ends, when your work is finished, you will hear him say. *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* Matt. xxv. 23. Amen.

DAVID'S ADVICE TO SOLOMON.

SERMON IX.

1 CHRON. xxviii. 9.

And thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.

THE dying advice of parents should be seriously regarded by children. David was deeply pious, and his advice to Solomon, in the last hours of his life, may be followed with peculiar advantage by all our youth. The life of David had been a life of danger and difficulty; but the knowledge and service of God had been his support. Solomon was about to succeed David in the throne of Israel, and he earnestly exhorted him to know and serve his God. *And thou*

Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.

This passage contains two things: first, we should know the God of David: secondly, we should serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.

I. WE SHOULD KNOW THE GOD OF DAVID.

The gentile world had many gods; but they were all idols of abomination. The God of David was *the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.* Acts xiv. 15. David could not be satisfied without an enjoyment of the *living God*, in the ordinances of religion. Hence he cries out, *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God!* Psal. xlvi. 2. But how should we know the God of David?

We should know the God of David in his *existence*. The being of a God is the foundation of religion. *He that cometh to God must believe that he is.* Heb. xi. 6. God has written his *being*, in legible characters, upon every human heart; and the man who turns his eyes in-

ward, may both read and understand. The works of creation teach the being of a God. *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world that are clearly seen, being understood by the things are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.* Rom. i. 20.

The *perfections* of God should be known. Wrong views of God necessarily lead to errors in religion. The Athenians were famous for learning, eloquence, and politeness ; but they were deeply plunged in idolatry and superstition. They had some knowledge of the unseen God : but, being ignorant of his perfections, their worship was imperfect. The apostle Paul who was sent to turn them from *darkness to light*, addressed them in the following remarkable words : *Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious : for as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.* Acts xvii. 22, 23. Divinely inspired men have declared the perfections of God, as far as it is necessary for those perfections to be known ; and their declarations are recorded in the scriptures for the instruction of mankind. These sacred writings in-

form us, that God is from everlasting to everlasting ; that he is a pure and invisible spirit ; that he is infinite in wisdom, almighty in power, and boundless in goodness ; that he is holy, just, merciful, and true ; that he is every where present ; and that he is unchangeable. Let us study these perfections with pious attention, that we may know how to conduct ourselves towards God, so as to meet with acceptance in his sight.

God should be known in his *works*. Christians are cautioned against the philosophy and vain deceit of the heathen nations ; but philosophy, as it implies a knowledge of creation, founded upon reason and experience, should be pursued. The study of nature is important in a religious point of view ; and a pious man should be conversant with God in all his glorious works. A knowledge of the works of God, enlarges our views of his perfections, and exalts him in our sight. These glorious works lead pious minds directly to himself. They see him, not only in the globes of light which roll above their heads, but in the grass and flowers beneath their feet ; and how pleasing is the thought, that he who made all things is our Father and our God !

All men should know his *providence*. God governs the universe; and the meanest creature is the constant object of his care. A sparrow does not fall to the ground without his notice. His providence, indeed, is a great deep, which mortals cannot fathom; but they may rest assured that he does all things well. A knowledge of providence is a perpetual source of comfort to good men. They feel quite easy amidst the storms of life. Winds may blow, and waves run high; but there is a pilot at the helm, who safely guides their little bark. Wars may alarm, and kingdoms fall; but God directs their steps and upholds their goings. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, (into affliction) he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* Psal. xxxvii. 23, 24.

We should know God in his *word*. Men have written many useful books, which may be read both with pleasure and profit; but mere human compositions, however great or good, are stamped with marks of imperfection. The word of God is perfect; and every page discovers evident marks of divinity. This blessed book will teach us how to live, and how to die: it will point

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out substantial happiness, and inform us how it may be attained. We should read this book by night and day, endeavour to understand it, and store our memories with the sayings of the Lord.

But, above all, we should know God in his *grace*. Men are sinners, but God is gracious. They are lost ; but he has provided a Saviour. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shquld not perish, but have everlasting life.* John iii. 16. Let us be diligent in acquiring correct views of those merciful methods, which infinite wisdom has devised, to save our souls from death. When we examine this wondrous plan, divine wisdom and goodness appear in every part ; and we are led to love and praise the Lord. If we accept this plan, upon the terms proposed, we shall obtain an experimental knowledge of God ; without which all other knowledge is vain. In theory we may know that there is a God ; but experience only enables a man to say, *My God.* We know his wisdom experimentally, when we follow his directions ; we know his power experimentally, when he saves from sin and danger ; we know his mercy experimentally, when we obtain mercy ; and

we have an experimental knowledge of his purity, when we are pure in heart. O let us earnestly seek a knowledge of God in these respects, that we may *enjoy* him as our God, both in time and in eternity!

II. WE SHOULD SERVE HIM WITH A PERFECT HEART, AND WITH A WILLING MIND.

God has a right to demand our *services*, not only because we are his creatures, but because we are wholly dependant upon him, both for life, and breath, and all things. Obedience to his will has ever been allowed, by wise and good men, to be a reasonable service. We should serve him with all our powers, and at all times: for our obligations to serve him never cease. Angels and glorified spirits serve him without intermission, and we should follow their example. Let us enter into his service now. We have served lusts and passions too long; and devils have too long tyrranized over our unhappy spirits. Every man has a master; and God should be the master of every man. Who is our master? By whom are we governed? Lord, bring us into subjection to thee; and may we serve thee all the days of our lives!

We should serve God with a *perfect heart.*

By the heart, we are to understand the intentions, and the word *perfect* signifies *sincerity*; so that we are to serve God with sincere intentions. When religion is popular, many profess to serve him merely to obtain applause. Others serve God, outwardly, for the sake of worldly gain; and religion is made subservient to their covetous desires. We should aim at his glory, and our own salvation. The heart, actuated by any other motives, cannot be perfect. Never let us lose sight of these great and important principles; but let us serve our God in a pure and perfect way.

God is a good master, and we should serve him with a *willing* mind. He affords plentiful support; he gives abundant wages; and his work is pleasant. Let these considerations induce us to be cheerful in his service, and to take delight in obeying his commands. While others view him as a tyrant, and serve him with slavish fear, let us view him as the best of beings, and serve him with filial love. Religion, without this, can neither be pleasing to God, nor profitable to men. Look at the sons of superstition, trembling with fear. Pity and pray for them; but let thy services be those of a rational and well informed mind, enlightened by the

word of God, and influenced by that grace which renovates the heart.

Upon the whole : if we wish to live comfortably, and to die in peace, let us know and serve the God of David. Let me seriously recommend the young, the gay, the thoughtless, and the trifling, to lay these things to heart. Particularly, let me speak to youth, who are about to make their appearance on the busy stage of life. Whatever be the objects of your pursuit, do not leave behind you the knowledge and the service of your father's God. Cultivate friendship with the unseen God, who gave you being, and who supplies your wants. Remember that the busy scenes of life will pass away, and be *as a dream when one awaketh*; and that then, like your pious fathers, you must descend to the silent grave: but, having followed their example, you shall rejoin them in a happier world. *Amen.*

THE STRAIT-GATE.

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SERMON X.

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LUKE xiii. 24.

*Strive to enter in at the strait-gate ; for many,
I say unto you, will seek to enter in
and shall not be able.*

MEN in general, engaged in unimportant enquiries and pursuits, neglect those things which are of infinite importance. This seems to have been the case with the person who asked our Lord, *are there few that be saved?* Jesus, instead of satisfying his vain curiosity, urged him, and all who were present, *to enter in at the strait-gate.* Hence we may infer, that it would prove a great blessing, if men would spend that time in *practical exertions*, which

they waste in *vain speculations*. No man can understand all things; but every man may find his way to heaven.

Let us enquire what is meant by the strait-gate—why many who seek are not able to enter—and then urge the exhortation.

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE STRAIT-GATE.

Our Lord, in his sermon upon the mount, speaks of a *strait-gate*, and a *narrow way*. There the *strait-gate* may imply an entrance upon christianity, and the *narrow way* the difficulties which christians meet with in their progress to eternal life. But in our text, the *strait-gate*, not being connected with the *narrow way*, includes both the beginning and progress of a christian to a state of *full* and *final* salvation. This will evidently appear by an attentive consideration of the question proposed, and of what is stated in the following verse. The question was, *Lord are there few that be saved?* No doubt the enquirer meant, are there few who find admittance into heaven? Our Lord said, *strive to enter in*, and in the following verse, a state of final exclusion from the heavenly world, is opposed to final salvation, and is expressed by the *shutting of the door*.

The phrase, *strait-gate*, is figurative, and refers to a passage which is difficult to enter. By this figure our Lord clearly intimates, to all his followers, that the entrance into a state of full salvation in heaven, will prove difficult. Genuine christianity, including both inward and outward holiness, is attended with many difficulties. The attainment of real holiness is difficult ; and perseverance in all holiness, is exceedingly difficult. These difficulties, however, do not arise from the nature of christianity, which, in itself is pleasant and delightful ; but they arise partly from what we feel in ourselves—partly from the world in which we live—and partly from the temptations of satan.

Whoever resolves to seek eternal life, will find a host of *foes within himself*. Old, and almost confirmed prejudices and habits, are difficult to overcome. The body has many weaknesses and propensities, which, in every period of life, are extremely difficult to conquer. The judgment is not always well informed—the will is prone to rebel—and the thoughts and affections are prone to wander. The passions, originally planted in our nature for valuable purposes, are often violent and irregular ; and unsanctified dispositions rise up

in battle array against our best desires and purposes. To keep these in a right state, requires constant watchfulness, earnest prayer, and vigorous exertions. Solomon felt the force of these truths when he said, *keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.* Prov. iv. 23.

The world in which we live presents innumerable difficulties to a good man. He finds it difficult to transact business with a good conscience. He finds it difficult to deny himself of those *pleasures of sin*, which present themselves daily to his view. He finds it difficult to bear the contempt which is frequently poured upon him by ignorant and wicked men. One calls him an *enthusiast*, and another represents him as a profound *hypocrite*. He abhors affected singularity, but finds it necessary, amidst reproaches, scorn, and contempt, to be singular in his whole deportment. Thus, through the depravity of human nature, and the prevalence of evil, the way to eternal life is strait and thorny.

At the same time, that wicked spirit who tempted and overcame our first parents in the garden of Eden, uses every artifice that malice

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can suggest, to increase the difficulties and dangers of a holy man. Sometimes, to delude the unwary, he appears as *an angel of light*; and at other times, to frighten the most cautious and courageous, he appears as a *roaring lion*. Nor will his wicked attempts cease, till the followers of Jesus are called to the enjoyment of that life and glory which they so much desire. Through every stage of their journey, to the fields of light, he will make their way difficult; and, perhaps, their struggles with him may be the most violent, when they are just about to enter into that *rest which remaineth for the people of God*. Heb, iv. 9.

II. WHY ARE MANY WHO SEEK UNABLE TO ENTER?

We cannot suppose that our Lord, in this awful passage, had an eye to any previous decree of damnation. Reprobation, from eternity, is a doctrine which dishonours God, and fills the mind of man with horror. The divine being is full of wisdom and goodness; and all his decrees, like himself, are wise and good. The reasons why many who seek are not able to enter, are the following: they seek in a wrong way—they seek in their own strength—they seek but do not strive—and they seek when it is too late.

Many seek in a *wrong way*. The Jews being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. Rom. x. 3. God has an undoubted right to save men in his own way, and he who seeks to be saved in any other, seeks in vain. Israel attained not the law of righteousness. *Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.* Rom. ix. 32. This is a point of vast importance. We have no right to contrive a method of salvation. One says; I should think *this* is right, and another says, I should think *that* is right; but the question is, what does God say in his holy word? If our religion be contrary to that of the Bible, we must necessarily seek to enter into life without being able.

Supposing we seek heaven in the way which God has pointed out, but never look to him for strength, vainly imagining that we can do all things of ourselves, we seek in vain. Man has natural power to sow and reap, to plant and build; but his power to do the will of God, in religious duties, is a gift of grace, Jesus Christ says, *without me ye can do nothing.* John xv. 5. And the Apostle Paul says, *I can do all things*

through Christ who strengtheneth me. Phil. iv.
13. How many have failed in their endeavours
through this fatal mistake!

Others who have seen the right way, and felt
a need of divine help, have failed for want of
vigorous exertions. A man may seek with care-
less indifference ; but he who strives, exerts all
his powers, like a man who struggles in an
agony. Religion requires this exertion, nor
can any man, who does not agonizē, enter in-
to the holiest place. Lukewarmness is hate-
ful to Jesus. Why then halt we between two
opinions ? Pure and undefiled religion here,
and the glory of heaven hereafter, are worth all
our exertions. A cold wish—a feeble desire—
a weak resolution, will accomplish nothing. We
should imitate an army which enters a city by
violence.

But perhaps the principal reason why those
who seek are not able to enter, is, they seek too
late. *When once the master of the house is risen
up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand
without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord,
Lord, open unto us, he shall answer and say unto
you, I know you not whence ye are.—Depart
from me all ye workers of iniquity.* Ver. 25—27.

God has given every man time and opportunity to prepare for heaven. Therefore, *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.* Eccles. ix. 10.

III. THE EXHORTATION, STRIVE.

That we may strive, we should see the *vast importance* of eternal life. Who would strive for a shadow? Who would spend his strength for naught? But that religion, which prepares for heaven, is the most serious, and important subject that the mind of man can contemplate. It is important as the only source of solid happiness; as the only means of safety; and as the only way to honour, glory, and immortality. Those who are destitute of religion are miserable; in danger of eternal ruin; and loaded with disgrace. What, then, is of equal importance? View life, with all its vanities and vexations; view death, with all its awful attendants; view eternity, and strive to enter in at the strait-gate.

The *short and uncertain continuance of life*, is another reason why we should strive to enter in at the strait-gate. We have a great work to do,

and but a moment on our hands. This day—this hour—this moment, may end our probationary state! The door may be shut against us, and shut forever, before another sun appears. While the door remains open, let us enter in without delay. Procrastination has ruined many immortal spirits. In the name of God, let us work *while it is day*: for *the night cometh, when no man can work*, John ix. 4.

Consider how the men of the world *strive for trifles*. How anxious is the merchant to gain wealth! What risks he runs! How abundant are his labours, cares, and anxieties! The valiant soldier ardently strives for glory. He foregoes the comforts of life, and exposes himself to hardships, toils, and death, for that honour, which, when gained, can never satisfy the unbounded desires of his heart. The man of pleasure is no less earnest to gain the fleeting pleasures of a day, which often leave a painful sting behind. And shall we, who have a heaven to gain, be less in earnest? O let it no longer be said, that *the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*! Luke xvi. 8.

Recollect how *satan strives to ruin men*.

That restless unhappy spirit never ceases to use the most artful and terrific means to destroy the human race. Shall we be less diligent in the work of salvation, than he is in the work of destruction? God forbid! He strives to ruin the world, because he hates both God and men. Let us from a principle of love to God, and our own souls, give diligence to make our calling and election sure; for, if we do these things, we shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

Look at the *conduct of holy men in ancient times*. They strove to enter in, with all their might. Patriarchs and prophets, martyrs and confessors, are worthy of our imitation in this respect. To them the world had but few charms. They considered heaven as their eternal home, and forced their way to it, through racks and tortures, fires and flames. Some have viewed them as fools and mad men; but they certainly were the *excellent of the earth*. Let us follow their ardent zeal, and steady perseverance, that we may rejoin them in our *Father's House*.

View all the glorified human spirits who have

entered into the kingdom. There is not one spirit, in that glorious assembly, who has not agonized to enter in at the strait-gate. Their crowns of glory, and harps of gold, are the rewards of this glorious strife. Do we desire to mix with them, and to share their honours? Then let us be *followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* Heb. vi. 12. Like them, let us be diligent in all the means of grace, and in all the duties of religion. Let faith and love abound. Pray much and watch with constant care. Resist and overcome every temptation to evil, and be ready to every good word and work.

This glorious strife *will soon be over.* Our difficulties will soon come to an end; and the glories of heaven will open to our view. Presently, we shall *gain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Phil. iii. 14. Careless triflers, who never were hearty in the cause of religion, and who did not seek in time, will be shut out; while those, who through divine strength, have sought in time, in the right way, and with earnestness and zeal, shall be admitted to the marriage supper of the lamb. Lord bring us all to that happy place, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

OBJECTS OF GOD'S HATRED.

SERMON XI.

PROV. vi. 16,—19.

These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination to him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood; an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth strife among brethren.

THE Lord *hates* nothing but what is *hateful*; and he *loves* nothing, with complacency, but what is *lovely*. This necessarily arises from his adorable perfections; for he is infinitely wise, and transcendently good. Men should endeavour to imitate these perfections, by *loving* what the Lord *loves*, and by *hating* what he *hates*.

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Our text mentions six things which the Lord hates, yea, seven which are an abomination to him. Let us examine them one by one.

I. THE LORD HATES A PROUD LOOK.

A proud look proceeds from a proud heart. Some men endeavour to conceal their pride; but they who indulge a proud look, expose themselves to every beholder. David probably was charged with this crime; but he appealed to the Lord for his innocence: *Lord mine heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty.* Psal. cxxxii.

1. The general causes of a proud look, are some supposed excellencies, either of birth, fortune, talents, or education; but none of these form a sufficient excuse for pride, which, in every point of view, is hateful both to God and men. A little reflection will discover the abominable nature of pride. It puffs men up with *self-sufficiency*, and *self-satisfaction*; so that they despise others, and idolize themselves. Pride robs God of his glory, and places the creature upon his throne. Devils fell through pride, and those who copy their example must fall into the same condemnation. It is generally the first sin that appears in human nature, and the last which is destroyed. As pride is hateful to God, it must either be totally destroyed, or

man must fall into destruction, for *Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.* Prov. xvi. 18.

II. THE LORD HATES A LYING TONGUE.

A *lie* is something which is spoken with a *design* to *deceive*. If a person relate an untruth, *without that design*, he cannot be charged with lying. The best of men are subject to mistakes and errors; but when mistakes and errors are not wilful, they are not hateful to God.

Truth in our words is of vast importance. Without truth all confidence would be lost amongst men. God, whom all should imitate, is a God of truth. A liar is universally and justly detested; and not only exposes himself to shame and contempt, but is the author of much confusion and mischief. Let us therefore sacredly attend to truth ourselves, and teach our children, from their infancy, to *abhor* a *lie*.

There are many sorts of lies, and many designs in lying. Some, by lying, design to make sport; others to make mischief; others to promote their own reputation, and to blast the character of their neighbours; others to conceal their faults; and others to make peace,

which is a hateful method of doing *evil* that *good* may come.

There are many awful proofs recorded in the scripture, of God's hatred of lies. Ananias and Sapphira his wife were struck dead for lying. It is most expressly forbidden, and threatened with the punishment of hell-fire. *All liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.* Rev. xxi. 8. The devil has been a liar from the beginning ; and all liars are his children.

III. THE LORD HATES THOSE HANDS WHICH SHED INNOCENT BLOOD.

Magistrates, to whom the power of God is committed, for the punishment of crimes, are allowed in certain cases to take away the life of man ; but they should proceed with great caution. It is better that a hundred guilty men should escape, than that one innocent man should suffer death. Private murders are horrid crimes ; but they seldom escape the hands of justice. Cain shed innocent blood ; but that blood cried from the ground unto the Lord, and speedy punishment was inflicted. Much innocent blood is shed in wars, very few of which can be justified. In all wars there is an ag-

gressor ; and the blood that is shed lies at the door of the aggressor. What a dreadful account will the great ones of the earth have to give in the day of judgment, for having embroiled whole nations in the horrors of war ! Life is a sacred thing, and he who presumes to take it away, without a just cause, may look for the vengeance of that God who has said, *Surely your blood of your lives will I require : at the hand of every beast will I require it ; and at the hand of man ; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man—Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.* Gen. ix. 5, 6.

IV. THE LORD HATES THE HEART THAT DEVISETH WICKED IMAGINATIONS.

The imagination of man is a fruitful source both of error and of wickedness. To devise wickedness in the imagination, is to invent and contrive methods of practising and promoting wickedness ; and it is a much greater crime than that which is done by the sudden impulse of a moment. The minds of some men are as deep and as dark as hell. Their imaginations are at work both day and night to devise plans and schemes of lust and cruelty. Religion, with all its beauties and excellencies, does not

escape their diabolical thoughts. They lay stratagems for the pious ; they project plans for the overthrow of every sacred truth, and of every heavenly principle. Their minds are like the dark regions of the infernal pit, where, it is probable, devils join in counsel against God and man, and then go forth with speed to execute their dreadful plans. Be it recollected, however, that a dark thought cannot spring up in the mind, without being instantly perceived by the piercing eye of an omniscient God, who hates, and will punish all this hidden iniquity. What a blessing it is that both providence and grace are continually counteracting these wicked imaginations !

V. THE LORD HATES THOSE FEET THAT BE SWIFT IN RUNNING TO MISCHIEF.

Wicked imaginations lead to wicked actions ; and men who cherish them are in haste to sin against the Lord. Pious men delight in doing good ; but these *sons of Belial* delight in doing mischief. This discovers a corrupt heart, where every action has its spring ; and their inward state is read in in their outward conduct. *A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.* Matt. xii. 35.

Swift feet indicate zeal; and, alas, there are too many who are zealous in mischief! They burn with strong desire to injure men, both in their persons, property, and character. Opportunities of this kind are not very frequent: but whenever an opportunity offers, these monsters of iniquity hasten to the spot, and exert their devilish power to the uttermost. How unlike the Son of God, who went about doing good! Such men may be compared to savage beasts of prey, and to devils, who hasten from place to place to ruin and destroy. But God, who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, beholds them with abomination; and soon will pour his heavy judgments down upon their guilty heads. A man of this description may prosper for a time; but soon, very soon, *His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings shall come down upon his own pate.* Psal. vii. 16.

VI. THE LORD HATETH A FALSE WITNESS THAT SPEAKETH LIES.

This refers to courts of justice. Common lying is hateful to God; but perjury is much more hateful. He who speaks lies in a court of justice, endangers the life and liberty of man; but some are so depraved that they regard nei-

ther. He that feareth not an *oath*, neither fears God, nor regards man. O guard against this growing evil, lest that God to whom your *solemn appeal* is made, should strike you dead upon the spot. When you are called upon to bear witness, be girt about with truth, and call to mind the solemn command which is given on this occasion. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.* Exod. xx. 16. Recollect seriously, that what you gain by a false oath is but of trifling value when compared with what you lose in the favour of heaven. Think of the injury you are doing to your neighbour; of the stings of conscience on a future day; and of the righteous judgments of God, which will fall upon you in an unexpected hour.

VII. THE LORD HATES HIM WHO SOWETH DISCORD AMONG BRETHREN.

Brethren are sons of one father. Good men, of all nations, having God for their Father, are brethren. Unity amongst brethren, both in private families and in churches, is very desirable. *Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew*

of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion. Psal. cxxxiii.

The seeds of discord are generally sown by violent tempers and secret whisperers. *A forward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.* Prov. xvi. 28. A violent temper frequently sets a house on a blaze, and the flames rage with ungovernable fury. When a man of this temper joins a religious society, there is great danger of discord, unless (which does not always happen) his boisterous temper be subdued by the grace of God. A whisperer ought to be held in abomination. He sows discord by artful and sly misrepresentations; when at the same time he is full of a pompous profession of friendship. He carries lies from one to an other, and peace and harmony flee at his approach. Discord may be sown by a whisperer who relates nothing but facts; for many facts should be concealed for the sake of peace. Weaknesses and frailties should be covered with the mantle love.

We cannot wonder that the Lord hates these evils. They are directly contrary to his nature; and they are ruinous to men. Be careful to avoid them at all times. If you regard

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either the honour of God, the happiness of men, or your own individual comfort, pray earnestly for a deliverance from these great sins. Thanks be to the blessed Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners ! Those who feel his saving power are humble ; they abhor a lie ; they are merciful ; they devise good things ; their feet are swift in running to do good ; they fear an oath ; and they *follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* Heb. xii. 14.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

SERMON XII.

Rom. v. 1.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ

IT is a matter of vast importance for a sinful world to know the way of justification before God. The heathens, with all their boasted wisdom, never found it out: the jews had but an imperfect view of it: but christianity has brought it to light.

Our text will lead us to examine every thing of importance relating to this subject: it may be divided into three parts: first, we are justified by faith: secondly, we have peace with God:

and, thirdly, it is through our Lord Jesus Christ that we have pardon and peace.

I. WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH.

Justification is either *legal* or *evangelical*. Legal justification implies *a full acquittal from charges*, upon the ground of *innocency*. Evangelical justification implies *the pardon of sin*, upon the ground of *Christ's atonement*.

We cannot be justified before God on the ground of *innocency*, because we have broken his *holy law*; and one transgression, were it not for divine mercy, would bring us into a state of everlasting condemnation. The law of God requires *perfect obedience*; and neither sorrow for the past, nor amendment in the future, can justify a sinner. What would a judge say to a criminal, in a court of justice, who should claim justification on either of these grounds? He would soon inform the poor unhappy man, that the law does not look at future conduct, but keeps a steady eye upon the past. The same remark we make upon the law of God; for future obedience, however perfect, cannot remove the guilt of past offences. Hence we infer, that *by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified*, Rom. iii. 20.

We are justified before God by the *forgiveness of our sins*. Justification stands directly opposed to condemnation ; and therefore to say that a believer has no condemnation, is the same thing as to say, *he is justified*. But how do we obtain a freedom from condemnation ? Certainly by a free and full pardon. The following passage is a direct proof that *forgiveness* and *justification* are the same thing ; *Through this man, Jesus Christ, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins : and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* Acts xiii. 38, 39. In one place it is said, *we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins*, and in another, that we are, *justified by his blood*. When a merciful God pardons our sins, through the merit of his Son, there is no more charge against us than if we had never sinned. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died.* Rom. viii. 33, 34.

O blessed state ! It is worth a thousand worlds ! Happy is the man whom grace has pardoned ! *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man*

unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. The vilest may obtain mercy, and enjoy this unspeakable blessing. Come my guilty brethren, let us humble ourselves before God, and thankfully accept his offered grace upon gospel terms.

We are justified *by faith*. Justifying faith implies two things: first, a full persuasion, upon proper evidence, that Jesus is the Saviour of the world: and secondly, a complete dependence upon him in that respect.

Faith does not justify as a meritorious act; but as a *term or condition* which God requires of man. To make this matter plain, let us closely attend to the following things: A penitent sinner *desires* pardon: He cannot be pardoned without a *sacrifice*: Christ, our passover, was *sacrificed for sin*: We believe the report, and firmly depend upon Christ as *our sacrifice*. Then God who was angry is reconciled, sin is pardoned, and we are justified. This method is plain, simple, and easy to be understood by the meanest capacity.

It appears highly proper that God, who saves men by an atonement, should require a dependence upon that atonement as a condition of

salvation. The great objection against this is, that it sets aside the necessity of practical religion; but when it is understood that justifying faith necessarily produces good works, the objection is at once removed. No doctrine can possibly be true which sets aside practical religion; but this establishes it, and places it upon a firm foundation. Faith produces love; and love produces obedience. The true believer submits to Christ as his king, and cheerfully obeys his laws. O let us now commit ourselves to Christ! Let us seek evangelical justification without delay! This blessing is purchased for us, and offered to us; and we may humbly claim it as our own. Having obtained it, let us recollect, that though we are justified by faith in this day of grace, yet that a day of judgment is approaching, in which we shall be justified by the evidence of our works. In that solemn day, *by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* Matt. xii. 37.

II. WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD.

Peace with God necessarily follows the pardon of sins. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.* 2 Cor. v. 19. Sinners are

at war with Almighty God: a thought which should strike them with terror; as they never had the smallest prospect of success! Omnipotence must prevail. When they lay down their arms, and humbly seek reconciliation with God, through Jesus Christ, he forgives them all, and takes them into favour. *Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints in light, and of the household of God. Eph. ii. 12, 13, 19. How sweetly does life glide away when this is our experience! How pleasing are our prospects of a future state! Devils and men oppose in vain, while we maintain this heavenly peace! Death with all its gloomy attendants, cannot terrify the believer who has peace with God. We are at war with sin, with hell, and with all that is evil in the world; but let us be of good courage, for we may overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

III. IT IS THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THAT WE HAVE PARDON AND PEACE.

When it is said we are justified and have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are to take into the account all that he ever did, and all that he is doing now on our account. We must not presume to separate his active obedience from his passive; as he had but one end in view in all he did, and in all he suffered, namely, the salvation of men.

The scriptures teach us that it is through Christ that justification is *attainable*. Had he not undertaken our cause, we must have remained in a state of condemnation. We could not have delivered ourselves; nor could we have been delivered by the highest angel in heaven. It has pleased God, for wise purposes, to make JESUS the medium of all his gracious communications to man. *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.* 1 Cor. iii. 11. O let us build upon this foundation, and we shall stand firm both in life and death!

It is through Christ that *faith* is accepted as our righteousness. The law demands that obedience, which, as fallen and sinful creatures, we cannot perform. The gospel requires faith; but faith would have no saving *object* if Christ had not died. It is the object which

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stamps value upon our faith, and renders it acceptable to God: so that if faith be *imputed* or *reckoned* to us for righteousness, it is wholly through the merit of our Lord.

Viewing things in this light, we see the great obligation we are under to love, honour, and obey our Saviour. Well might the apostle Peter say, *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.* 1 Pet. ii. 7. He is *precious* to a believer in all his sacred offices and characters. He is *precious* in life and death, and will be so to all eternity!

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever.
Rom. xvi. 25—27. *Amen.*

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IMPORTANCE of REGENERATION.

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SERMON XIII.
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JOHN iii. 3.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

EVERY man should study the doctrine of regeneration with deep attention, because happiness, both in this and in a future world, absolutely depends upon this *momentous* subject. Those who live and die unregenerate cannot see the kingdom of God. They will be cast out of the divine presence, and perish in their sins.

Nicodemus, a ruler of the jews, came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, *Rabbi, we*
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know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. John iii. 2. This was an honest confession of Christ as a divine prophet; but as to the nature of Messiah's kingdom, and the necessity of entering into it by a *second birth*, Nicodemus was as dark as the night in which he came. Without any comment upon the confession of Nicodemus, Jesus instantly replied, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

We shall consider, first, what is meant by being born again: secondly, the necessity of being born again: and, thirdly, the means to be used that we may be born again.

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY BEING BORN AGAIN?

The *new birth* has been misunderstood, and therefore misrepresented, by many who have borne the christian name. Some have maintained that *water baptism* is the new birth; but they have taken the *sign* for the *thing signified*. Some have supposed *outward reformation* to be the new birth: not recollecting that there may be an outward reformation without a change of heart. Others have supposed that to be born again is to *join a christian sect, and to make an open profession of christianity*; but they are

as wide of the mark as the former. Many profess the name of JESUS who never felt his saving power. One remark will contain a full answer to all these dangerous errors : Baptism, a mere reformation of manners, and a profession of Christ, are external things ; but regeneration is an internal work of the holy Spirit.

The language of scripture is often figurative, Things of a spiritual nature are represented by natural things, to make them more intelligible, and to impress them more deeply on the mind, The phrase, *born again*, is a figure taken from a natural birth ; and it conveys the idea of an entrance upon a new life. By a natural birth we become *men* ; and by a spiritual birth we become *christians*. As our natural birth introduces us to natural things, so our spiritual birth introduces us to spiritual things. By our first birth we possessed the nature of man ; by our second we possess the nature of God, These remarks make it evident that regeneration implies both a quickening, and a renewal of the soul.

While men are in a state of nature, they are are spiritually dead ; but when they are born again, new life is communicated by the Spirit

of God. The Apostle Paul said to the Ephesians, *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Eph. ii. 1. This work is called a *resurrectien*, because new life is given to that which was dead. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.* Col. iii. 1. It may be called a *creation*, because that exists which did not exist before. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* 2 Cor. v. 17. In regeneration, then, a new life begins in the soul, very different from the natural life. We were born of earthly parents to a mortal life; but we are born of God to a life which begins in grace, and ends in glory.

In this state, *Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17. Our views of things are new: Our feelings and enjoyments are new: Our hopes are new: Our conduct is new: for *whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* 1 John iii. 9. Here we may remark how fitly *water-baptism* is used as an emblem of regeneration. Water washes and purifies the body; regeneration is the washing and purifying of the soul. Therefore, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* John iii. 5. This passage proves the necessity of water-bap-

tism, as a symbol, where it can be administered; but it makes an important distinction between the baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit. Let us carefully attend to this distinction, lest by mistaking the one for the other, we should shut the door of the kingdom against ourselves. Nothing short of a thorough change of heart can be admitted as the *new birth*. He who is born again has received a new and heavenly nature. The image of God, which was defaced by sin, is again stamped upon the soul: and God, who had withdrawn, returns with his light and glory, to inhabit the renewed mind. Hence it is said, *Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.* Rom. viii. 9.

II. THE NECESSITY OF BEING BORN AGAIN.

The necessity of this great change is urged by our Lord upon this ground, namely, that without it we cannot see the kingdom of God.

By the *kingdom of God* we may understand either the church on earth, or the church in heaven. The church in heaven is called a *kingdom*, because God is its absolute ruler and governor. The church on earth, in this respect, resembles the heavenly church. Both acknowledge the

Lord as king : both can join in the song of Moses and the Lamb : *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.* Rev. xv. 3. Churches, so called, have been formed by men, who have ruled with a rod of iron ; but the church of Christ, including believers of every sect, is a spiritual kingdom set up on earth, under the immediate government of Heaven.

The baptism of water may admit us into an outward church ; but he who enters into the true church, the kingdom of believers, must be born again. The kingdom of God is holy ; but all men in a state of nature are unholy. While they remain so, they can neither see, enjoy, nor enter into his kingdom. They may have a profession, a name, a place amongst the saints ; but nothing short of a saving change can make them subjects of this great King. If men cannot be subjects of this great King, in the kingdom of his grace, without regeneration, how can they become his subjects in the kingdom of glory ? That kingdom is perfectly pure, and impure spirits cannot enter. Indeed, could they enter its *sacred gates*, heaven would not be a place of happiness to them, as it is the *state* rather than the *place*, which is a source of real

happiness. But even that will be denied, and all the unholy will be shut out for ever. *There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* Rev. xxi. 27.

Hence we may see the folly of our false hopes. We hope to see the kingdom of God without a sound conversion. We vainly imagine that outward baptism, a few formal prayers, and a formal profession, will fully qualify us for the inheritance of the saints in light ; but we may be baptised with water, say many prayers, attend religious worship, and make a profession before men, and after all be damned. O let us be in earnest to obtain this necessary change ! We are in earnest in our wordly pursuits, and shall we neglect that on which our all depends? Our time is short : our opportunities are passing away : and, before we are aware, we shall find ourselves in a world of spirits. Let us then set about this work immediately ; and may God in mercy point out our way, and bless the means we use !

III. THE MEANS TO BE USED THAT WE MAY BE BORN AGAIN.

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Serious reflection, and an attentive perusal of the word of God, will soon convince us that we must be born again. Suppose we argue thus : The kingdom of God is spiritual ; but we are carnal. The kingdom of God is pure ; but we are polluted. The kingdom of God is under the government of God ; but we are under the government of the devil. How then can we see that kingdom, without regeneration ? Remaining as we are, we are fit for no society but that of wicked men and wicked spirits ; and in whatever way a God of justice may punish them, we must share their punishment.

Regeneration is a work of God, and therefore we should *pray* that he would bare his mighty arm, and form our souls anew. To be born of the Spirit is to be born by the mighty energy and influence of the Spirit ; and to be born from above is to be born by that heavenly power which only can bring us into spiritual life. Pray then for the Spirit of your God, that he may work in you this saving change. God is willing to give us his Spirit. Our Lord says, *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him.* Luke xi. 13.

We must forsake our sins before we can be

born again. *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* 1 John iii. 8. Sin brought death into our souls, and while we follow it we must remain in death. Every sin must be renounced before we can be born again; for sin blinds our eyes, stops our ears, hardens our hearts, and effectually prevents the renewing operations of the holy Spirit.

If we desire to be born again, *let us attend the public worship of God.* He is present in the assemblies of his people. His word is preached with mighty power, and many have been converted under the word. In public worship we wait upon God for the renewing influences of his grace; and if our hearts are sincere, we shall feel the power of the word. The Apostle Paul speaking of a preached gospel, says, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* Rom. i. 16.

Lastly. We must *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe in him, we are both pardoned and renewed. *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which*

were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John i. 12, 13. Faith brings the blessing down. And when we receive Jesus, as he is held forth in the gospel, we are born again. O let us try to believe ! The power, we know, is a gift of God ; but believing is an act of man. Let us exert the power which God has given, and we shall be saved. For *whosoever believeth with a living faith, that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* 1 John v. 1. May God of his infinite mercy, renew my heart, and the hearts of my readers, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE
CONDUCT AND END OF ENOCH.

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SERMON XIV.
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GEN. v. 24.

*And Enoch walked with God, and he was not ;
for God took him.*

THE account of men before the flood presents a melancholy picture of human nature. There was indeed a pious Seth, in whose day men began to call upon the name of the Lord ; but they were soon corrupted by the female descendants of Cain, who are called the *daughters of men*. There was also a pious Enoch, who *walked with God, and he was not : for God took him.*

Let us consider, first, the conduct of Enoch ; and, secondly, his end.

I. THE CONDUCT OF ENOCH.

Enoch walked with God in the way of pure and undefiled religion; which implies friendship, purity, and obedience.

Can two walk together except they be agreed?
Amos iii. 3. We avoid the company of men whom we do not esteem. We carefully shun our enemies; but we love to walk with friends. Friendship implies mutual love; and there is a mutual love between God and good men. *We love him, because he first loved us.* 1 John iv. 19. Enoch enjoyed friendship with God, through the *promised Deliverer*; for a throne of grace was set up for guilty man, when God said to the serpent, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* Gen. iii. 15. Friendship with God, through Jesus Christ, is one of the greatest blessings that man can enjoy. It is productive of substantial happiness, and everlasting honour. But, how amazing it is that the most high God should stoop so low as to make a worm his friend! What honour this confers upon the creatures! What abundant cause have the friends of God to unite in blessing and praising his holy name! O be careful to preserve friendship with God, and

then you may say with David, *I will not be afraid of ten thousand of the people, that have set themselves against me round about!* Psal. iii. 6.

Walking with God implies purity. God is perfectly holy ; and he cannot walk with the unholy. *This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* 1 John i. 5, 6. Sinners are said to be afar off from God ; but saints are brought nigh. Deeply impressed with this subject, David said, *Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness : neither shall evil dwell with thee.* Psal. v. 4. Evil can no more abide in the presence of God, than darkness can abide in the presence of the sun ; so that it is extremely absurd to think of *walking with God* in a state of impurity. It must be allowed, however, that evil may remain in some good men, who walk with God ; but it is not predominant. Evil in them is under the control of grace, and they may be called *holy*, because holiness is the predominant principle in their hearts. They direct all to God. They love him at all times, and honour him in all things. Evil is their grief and burden, and they earnestly seek a full conformity to the image of God.

To walk with God implies *obedience*. Enoch had this testimony that he pleased God. The holiness of his heart produced holiness in his life. He walked with God in the discharge of every duty which God required. Thus Hezekiah walked in health and strength; and when sickness came, he besought the Lord to remember it: *I beseech thee O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart; and have done that which was good in thy sight.* Isa. xxxviii. 3. The man who walks with God, makes no ostentatious shew of piety, but is found *serving the Lord with all humility of mind.* Acts xx. 19. He is resigned to the divine will, and is contented in every situation. Devotion both private and public is delightful to him. He walks in all the ordinances of religion, honouring, and enjoying the means of grace. He retreats from the world, and all its frantic ways; and mixes with men only upon necessary occasions. When these occasions are over, he quickly returns to his God, and cleaves to him with full purpose of heart. He owns the authority of God, walks in imitation of God, and enjoys God as his portion. Let us persevere in this holy walking, both in prosperity and in adversity, in honour and in disgrace, in life and in death:

Where he goes let us humbly follow, as the Israelites followed the cloud and pillar of fire in the wilderness ; and we may rest assured that God will guide us to the promised land.

God walks with us, to direct our steps, to defend us in danger, and to comfort us in distress. While he is near we are safe. *I have set the Lord always before me : because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.* Psal. xvi. 8. We often repent of having walked with unholy men ; but we shall never repent of having walked with God. The more closely we walk with God in the paths of holiness, the more delightful are his ways ; but the man who walks merely in the paths of outward and formal obedience, is a stranger to those joys which accompany the life and power of religion.

II. THE END OF ENOCH.

The end of Enoch is expressed in two particulars : *He was not ; for God took him.*

Enoch was not any longer an inhabitant of this lower world ; he had left it to return no more. He left his relations, his friends, and his enemies. His pious friends might seek him for counsel and encouragement, as the sons of

the prophets sought Elijah, upon the mountains of Israel ; but *he was not*. His enemies might seek him with envious and malicious designs, against this person and character; but *he was not*. Soon it will be said of us, *they are not*. Death is a final departure out of this world ; and in a short time we must all depart! The apostle Paul longed to *depart*, and to be with Christ ; and when death drew near, he said, *The time of my departure is at hand.* 2 Tim. iv. 6. At death our earthly connections are broken, our business is ended, and our race is run. Happy will it be if we arrive at the mark, and gain the prize!

Enoch had been a fine example to his family, to the church, and to the world ; but *he was not*. How soon we lose examples of piety ! Let us imitate and highly prize them for their works' sake ! Enoch was a prophet: but prophets must die. *Your fathers, where are they : and the prophets do they live for ever ?* Zech. i. 5. Prize faithful ministers. You will not have them long ; they will soon depart out of your sight, and you will hear their voice no more.

God took Enoch out of a world of snares, temptations, and afflictions. When a good man dies all these are left behind. The world

probably had used him ill; but God took him out of the reach of ill usage. He had fought and conquered, and God took him to a state of peace and glory. He had walked with God on earth, and God took him to live with him in heaven. Heaven is a place where all good men meet after death. God takes them to behold his glory, to sing his praise, and to enjoy his perfections. What a glorious assembly! Enoch was made fit for that place, and God took him to reside there for ever! When wicked men die, devils take them. They are children of the devil, and he is suffered to take his own. Good men are children of God, and they are taken to dwell with their heavenly Father. Heaven is their home, and they will reside there when the system of nature is destroyed, and when the visible heavens and earth have passed away. O may we be found there when we are lost amongst men!

God took Enoch out of the world by a *translation*. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him.* Heb. xi. 5. The circumstances of his translation are not recorded. Job Orton says, "This was probably done in a public manner, on some solemn occa-

sion ; by which God testified his regard to his singular piety, and comforted the hearts of good and pious men with the hope of future happiness, when those great calamities, of which he prophesied, should come." He was taken up, body and soul, without seeing death. No doubt a great change passed upon his body to make it fit for the heavenly world ; for *flesh and blood*, in its present state, *cannot inherit the kingdom of God.* 1 Cor. xv. 50. It was an easy matter for God, whose power is unlimited, to translate Enoch, and to change his natural body to a spiritual body. The same power will be employed at the last day, in raising the dead and making the bodies of the saints meet for the heavenly inheritance. O let us admire and adore the Lord God omnipotent !

We cannot expect a translation without seeing death ; but, if we walk with God, we may expect a deliverance from this present world, and an abundant entrance into the *holiest place.* Death will find us out ; but he with whom we walk will not forsake us in that awful hour. Every pious man may say with the Psalmist, *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* Psal. xxiii. 4.

God requires us to walk with him; and that which is a duty, is a glorious privilege! Let us now begin to walk with God; and though the way be narrow, let us cheerfully go forward, without turning either to the right hand or to the left. The journey will soon end; the reward will soon be given. In the mean time God will uphold and bless us in the way. Every new day will lead us to new enjoyments; and the nearer we approach the heavenly country, the more glorious prospects will open to our view. All the glorified human spirits in heaven, have walked with God on earth. Let us follow their bright example, that we may overtake them in the skies. Wicked men may hold us in contempt; but God, our father and our friend, will cheer us with his love. Hold out a little longer, and *thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off:* Isa. xxxiii. 17. Amen.

NOAH WARNED OF THE FLOOD.

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SERMON XV.

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HEB. xi 7.

By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

IT is possible to walk with God in times of the greatest corruption and depravity. We have proof of this in the example of Noah, who was just and perfect in his generation, and who walked with God when the earth was corrupt, and filled with violence. God gave Noah evident tokens of his approbation, by warning him of the flood, and directing him to build an ark to the saving of his house. Noah believed

God, and prepared an ark, whereby he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Our text contains several interesting particulars, which we shall consider in the order they stand.

I. NOAH WAS WARNED OF THINGS NOT SEEN AS YET.

The things not seen were *the flood*, and *the destruction of all flesh*. The flood was determined upon in heaven, and revealed to Noah a long time before it came to pass. God had said to him, *Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven: and every thing that is in the earth shall die.* Gen. vi. 17. When this awful warning was given, there was no appearance of a flood, either in the heavens or in the earth. Nothing was seen in the *visible world*, to alarm the guilty sons of men; but in the *invisible world*, a dreadful storm was preparing to punish their bold and impious crimes. Thus, when the wicked think themselves most secure, unseen dangers are at hand; and punishments follow crimes,

which are not repented of, with as much steadiness and certainty as effects in nature follow their proper causes. God, indeed, is long-suffering, and waiteth to be gracious ; but, when his long-suffering grace continues to be abused, he suddenly destroys his enemies. How many rise in the morning, blooming in health and strength, who are cut down before the evening ! How many undertake journeys of pleasure and profit, with probable prospects of returning in peace and prosperity, who are never suffered to return to their habitations ! In the midst of business and pleasure, and in the act of sinning against God, many are called to give a dreadful account of themselves. Who can tell what will happen the next hour ? None but that God who *warned Noah of things not seen as yet.*

Noah was *warned*, that he might *warn* a sinful world. God seldom punishes the guilty without giving them repeated warning. He warns by the inward voice of his Spirit, and by the ministry of his word. The old world was warned both ways. The Spirit warned them ; in reference to which God said, *My spirit shall not always strive with man.* Gen. vi. 3. Noah, who was a preacher of righteousness, warned them both by his preaching and the building

of the ark. The time of warning was so long, that those countries which were at the greatest distance from the place where Noah preached and built the ark, might hear and humble themselves before the Lord ; but we do not learn that one person in all the earth, paid any regard either to what was said or done by Noah, *They were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away.* Matt. xxiv. 38, 39,

II. NOAH BELIEVED GOD, AND WAS MOVED WITH FEAR.

There can be no piety towards God without faith in his word. Every man should believe both the promises and the threatenings of God ; for both will be accomplished. Some believe in neither, and therefore remain unmoved either by hope or fear. God kindly warns them ; but they disbelieve and despise the warning. What a blessing it would be if every man, like Noah, would take God at his word ; then the wicked would be reclaimed from their wickedness, and the righteous would be confirmed in their righteousness.

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Noah was moved with that fear which urged him to obedience. He felt a deep reverence for the Lord God, and was alarmed for his family and the world. The judgments of God are fearful things, and cannot be viewed, even by holy men, without a solemn awe! What then should those men feel, for whom judgments are prepared! O that sinners may be moved with fear, while there is time to repent; lest, when the judgments of God come down, mercy may have fled for ever. Fear, when mercy has fled, can have no other tendency than that of increasing the misery of the fearful. Then, *he who fleeth from the noise of fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare.* Isa. xxiv. 18. O let fear move our hearts while mercy is offered, that we may glorify God in the day of gracious visitation!

III. NOAH PREPARED AN ARK TO THE SAVING OF HIS FAMILY.

The ark was built by the direction of God, as the only means of safety to Noah and his family. It was built large enough to contain the family of Noah, a vast number of fowls, cattle, and creeping things, and provisions for their support while they remained in the ark. *The*

length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. Gen. vi. 15. The ancient cubit was the distance from the elbow bending inward to the extremity of the middle finger, containing a foot and a half, or half a yard; so that the ark was about one hundred and fifty yards long, twenty-five broad, and fifteen yards high; and, in every respect, it was constructed upon such a plan as to answer all the purposes of heaven.

The men of that day would probably laugh at Noah, and deem him mad for building an ark, when there was no appearance of a flood. In our day many deem it madness to prepare for unseen things. But let us begin and persevere in our preparations for death and eternity, whatever scoffs and reproaches we receive from wicked men. Let us diligently use all those means of safety to which the word of God directs, and by the blessing of Heaven our labour will be crowned with success. Especially let us seek an interest in Jesus, whom we should consider as the *ark of our salvation*; and then when dreadful torrents of wrath are poured down upon a wicked world, we shall be safe.

The family of Noah was saved on account of his piety. O that we may be made instruments of salvation to our families ! To this end let us try to persuade our partners in life, our children, and our servants, to seek salvation by Jesus Christ; informing them of the certainty of perishing, if they persevere in their wicked deeds, and neglect that only method of salvation which God has appointed through his beloved Son. Every soul in the old world perished, except Noah and his family; for the water covered the earth, and buried the tops of the highest mountains; and every soul will finally perish who neglects the great salvation which the gospel offers to the world.

We have convincing proofs of an universal deluge. Many of the most ancient and respectable heathen writers mention it, and almost every nation has traditionaly accounts of that event. *Marine substances* are found buried, at a considerable distance from the surface, upon the summit of the highest mountains; and the skeletons of animals are found buried in many parts of the globe, which they never could inhabit. But what need of other proofs, when the universal flood is positively asserted in the word of God? We need not at-

tempt to account for it upon natural principles; for it was suddenly brought upon the world by an omnipotent God, in a way, which, perhaps, can never be explained by man.

IV. NOAH CONDEMNED THE WORLD BY PREPARING THE ARK.

Noah did not condemn as a judge, who pronounces sentence; but his preaching and conduct condemned the world, by furnishing out matter of accusation against them. His faith furnished matter of accusation against their unbelief; his reverence for God and religion, and his steady obedience to the divine commands, furnished matter against their irreverence and disobedience. He was a reprobate of their evil deeds. The life of a pious man condemns a wicked world; and the most hardened wretches sometimes feel the stings of a guilty conscience, when they behold his holy conversation.

God will soon condemn the world openly, by an awful sentence of justice, which will be final and unalterable. Let all who feel condemnation, hasten by prayer and earnest supplication, to a merciful God, and plead the merit of Jesus Christ, who died to save from sin.

Let them seriously reflect upon that day which is approaching, wherein justice will not be mixed with mercy. It is awful to feel condemnation, even in a world of mercy ; but it will be much more so to feel it when we shall stand before the judge of all the earth.

V. NOAH BECAME HEIR OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS BY FAITH.

Righteousness by faith is not a *novel* doctrine. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.* Heb. xi. 4. The faith which makes us righteous before God, is a living, active faith, which produces universal obedience both in heart and life ; and it is through Jesus Christ alone, that this faith is *imputed* for righteousness. Let us seek righteousness upon the ancient plan. Let us so believe God as to obey him in all things, at all times, and in all circumstances ; and then we may safely rely upon him for every necessary blessing, both in time and in eternity.

Noah became *heir* of the righteousness which is by faith. He became entitled to all the blessedness of a true believer. He was an heir of God ; and so is every believer. Believers are

heirs of those blessings which God has promised in his holy word. What a privilege to be an heir of righteousness ! We have nothing to hope for on the ground of works without faith, for while we remain in unbelief our works are not accepted ; but when we believe with our hearts unto righteousness, all the blessings both of grace and glory are our own, and we may claim them with as much propriety as an heir, when he comes of age, can claim his estates. The time is fast approaching, when titles to earthly possessions, will be of little value. Happy is the man, who by faith in Jesus, becomes entitled to the glories of the upper world. O Lord, grant this blessing both to me and to my readers ! *Amen.*

HAGAR IN THE WILDERNESS SEEN OF GOD.

SERMON XVI.

GEN. xvi. 13.

Thou God seest me,

ABRAHAM had many family trials. Sarah, the wife of his youth, was restrained from child-bearing, which proved a source of considerable uneasiness. Abraham was blessed with abundant wealth; but he had no child to inherit his wealth. Great promises had been made to his seed; but there was no appearance of those promises being fulfilled. At length, that he might have children, Sarah gave unto him Hagar, her handmaid; and when she conceived, Sarah was despised in her eyes. The improper behaviour of Hagar drew upon

her the resentment of her mistress, who dealt so hardly with her, that she fled from her face. The angel of the Lord found her in the wilderness, by a fountain of water, exhorted her to return to her duty, and gave her great encouragement. The place was rendered remarkable by the presence of the angel of the Lord ; and she called the Lord that spake unto her, *Thou God seest me.*

In these words several important truths are suggested—we should often apply this passage to ourselves—much good will result from this practice.

I. SEVERAL IMPORTANT TRUTHS ARE SUGGESTED.

Amongst other truths suggested by this passage, we shall particularly notice the following: That God is present in every place -- that there is a watchful providence over men - that all the affairs of men are fully known to God—and that God is amazingly condescending.

God is present in every place. He is not only in our houses and in our cities, but in the solitary wilderness: so that every man in the world may say, *Thou God seest me.* We cannot hide

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ourselves from him, because he is every where present. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, the rays of light which first dart from the sun, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee ; but the night shineth as the day ; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.* Psal. cxxxix. 7—13.

There is a watchful *providence* over men, from the moment of their birth, to the moment of their death. God sees their varied situations and circumstances, and knows what is best for them in every state. Were it not for this superintending providence, how many would perish ! Poor Hagar might have perished in the wilderness, had there been no God to care for her. She was far out of the reach her of master's care ; but she could say, *Thou God seest me.* Thus our heavenly Father extends his care to all the helpless children of men. *He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and*

sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
Matt. v. 45.

All the affairs of men are fully *known* to God. Men only see that which is external ; but God sees the heart. *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.* Psal. xc. 8. As a wise and just judge, God weighs all our actions. *For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.* 1 Sam. ii. 3. A crime cannot be committed in the most secret place without his notice ; and he sees every good work, both in its beginning, progress, and end. This truth should produce in us a solemn awe of the divine Majesty, and a sacred fear of offending. *Stand in awe, and sin not : commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.* Psal. iv. 4.

God is amazingly *condescending*. He might overlook poor mortals amidst his great and glorious works. The universe is full of inhabitants, many of which are unknown to men. What vast multitudes of angels and glorified spirits, surround the throne of God ! How numerous and glorious are the stars of the firmament ! Look up to the heavens, and learn to admire that God who is mindful of man.

David seems to have been deeply and piously impressed with this subject, in an evening meditation upon the starry heavens : *When I consider thy heavens, the works of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Psal. viii. 3, 4.

II. WE SHOULD OFTEN APPLY THIS PASSAGE TO OURSELVES.

When we are engaged in *religious duties*, let us recollect that we are *seen of God*. Do we retire into our closets for devotional purposes ? Let each of us *seriously* recollect the important truth, *Thou God seest me*. When we call our families together to worship God, we should remember that his eyes are upon us. The sacred scriptures should be read daily, and that man who reads should always think, *Thou God seest me*. We assemble in the great congregation, to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and there we see and are seen of many ; but every one, whether preacher or hearer, should call to mind, *Thou God seest me*.

In all our *worldly concerns* we should apply this passage. The duties of life may call us forth to labour with our hands, to buy and sell,

to plant and build, to sow and reap, to mix with company of almost every description ; but in every employment, and in every company, seriously remember, *Thou God seest me.* Carry about with you a deep impression of a present God, wherever you go. Whether you are in the field, in the market, or in the shop, still think of a present God. It is a mark of the most abandoned character to enquire, *How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?* Psal. lxxiii. 11. Truth, however, compels us to say, that most men go about their business as if God had no knowledge of what is done on earth ; and that man is held in sovereign contempt, who, mixing piety with business, often exclaims, *Thou God seest me.*

If adversity be our lot, let us not forget that *God sees us.* Do we suffer pain, are we reproached, are we in want, are we oppressed, are we persecuted? God sees. Are we in prison, or in banishment? The eyes of God are upon us there. The Lord said to Moses, *I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows.* Now, therefore, behold the cry of the children of *Israel is come up unto me; and I have also seen*

the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Exod. iii. 7, 9. *

In our *prosperity* we are *seen of God*. Do riches increase? God sees both how we came by them, and how we use them, and whether we are disposed to give him the glory. Does our fame spread far and wide? God sees how we bear it, and whether we are disposed to give him the honour, or, like Nebuchadnezzar, to take it to ourselves. When that monarch walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and said, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?* God saw him: and, *while the word was in the king's mouth there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee.* Dan. iv. 30, 31. What an awful lesson to the proud!

In short, wherever we go, let us still apply this solemn truth, *Thou God seest me*. Pious men, like David, frequently address God in such language as this: *Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord thou knowest it altogether. Thou*

hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Psal. cxxxix. 3—5.

III. MUCH GOOD WILL RESULT FROM THIS PRACTICE.

A deep sense of God's presence will lead us to a *circumspect* walk. When we are in the company of wise and good men, we are circumspect. Their presence inspires us with a kind of awe, which has an amazing influence upon our conduct. In the company of the ignorant and wicked, we are apt to throw off every restraint, and to follow the strong tide of our corruptions. Surely, then, a deep sense of the presence of God will lead us to circumspection. That man will be careful both of his inward and outward walk, who calls to mind, *Thou God seest me*

This will prove a source of consolation in affliction. How supporting in affliction is the presence of that God who pities and relieves the distressed and afflicted! Our fellow creatures may not see our afflictions; or if they do, they may neither pity nor relieve. Think, then, when thy spirit is bowed down with grief, and when wearisome days and nights are appointed unto thee, *Thou God seest me.* God knows how much

thou canst bear; what support is necessary; and when thou shouldst be delivered. Commit thyself to him, and leave all thy affairs in his hands. He looks upon thee, that he may do thee good. When we intend to relieve an indigent man, we look at him; but when we have no such intention, we turn our face away. God might hide his face, and leave us in distress; but after all our crimes, he looks with kind compassion.

The presence of God will reconcile us to trying *providences*. What does it signify how much, or in what way we suffer, if God see us? Come what will we are prepared, and every providential occurrence is overruled for our good. We dread solitary affliction; but we love to have friends about us in a trying hour. Well, we may be confident that whatever afflictions take place, we shall not be left alone. In every future period, a good man will be able to say, what he says now: *Thou God seest me.*

Under these impressions we shall cultivate holy *tempers*. We dare not suffer either unholy passions to burn, or malice to take root in our hearts, while we recollect that God sees us. We dare not indulge vain thoughts, we

dare not murmur, we dare not be light and trifling, while we think upon this passage, *Thou God seest me.*

An application of this truth will help our devotions. God is not *far off* when we pray. He beholds the bended knee, the uplifted eye, and the rising desire. *The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers.* 1 Pet. iii. 12. Jesus pleads, and through him God is attentive when we pray ! O persevere in this duty, and never forget, *Thou God seest me.*

THE
DESTRUCTION of SODOM.

SERMON XVII.

GEN. xix. 24, 25.

Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven ; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

THE destruction of Sodom was a most awful event, and it stands recorded in the sacred scriptures, as a perpetual warning to presumptuous sinners. The country to this day bears dreadful marks of that calamity ; sufficient both to convince unbelievers, and to alarm the careless. The place where Sodom stood is now a

great lake, called the *Dead* or *Salt Sea*, into which the river Jordan empties itself. It is about thirty miles long, and ten broad. The waters are so bitter and fetid, that neither fish, nor any other aquatic animals can possibly live in them. The Greeks call it *Asphaltites*, on account of the *Asphaltus* or bitumen with which it abounds. The land on its borders is not cultivated. It is of a white appearance and mixed with salt; and it has totally lost the power of vegetation.

Let us carefully examine this dreadful judgment, that we may learn to abhor and detest, those sins which provoked the indignation of God, and brought ruin upon Sodom and Gomorrah. The whole account may be divided, into three parts: the circumstances which preceded the destruction: the destruction itself: and the circumstances which followed the destruction.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH PRECEDED THE DESTRUCTION.

Sodom *enjoyed largely the bounties of divine providence*. The plain of Jordan, on which it stood, was fruitful, and produced not only the necessaries, but even the luxuries of life. In

reference to this, we read that the inhabitants had *fulness of bread*. When Lot left Abraham, he pitched his tent toward Sodom, because he had *beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord*. Gen. xiii. 10.

But, notwithstanding the goodness of the Lord, *the people were exceedingly wicked*. They gave themselves up to fornication, and went after *strange flesh*. *The men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly*. Rom. i. 27. They were proud, luxurious, idle, and uncharitable. *This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hands of the poor and needy*. Ezek. xvi. 49.

Lot, a righteous man, dwelt amongst them before the overthrow; and, it is probable, often reproved and warned them of approaching danger. *That righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*. 2 Pet. ii. 8. And can we suppose that he never opened his mouth? Could he possibly remain a si-

lent spectator of their evil deeds? We read of one tender reproof which he gave them the evening before the overthrow. He went out to a *filthy rabble*, which had assembled before his door for vile purposes, and said, *I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.* Ver. 7. But they treated his mild reproof with contempt, saying, *This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge.* Ver. 9.

God made *particular enquiry into their conduct.* Human conduct is reported in heaven. Angels, though invisible, mix with men, and carry intelligence of all their proceedings to the throne of God. In allusion to this, God said to Abraham, *The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come up unto me; and if not, I will know.* Gen. xviii. 20, 21. God, who knows all things, has no need of information from others, but, throughout his vast empire, he employs agents to carry on his various purposes, and thereby promotes their happiness. He has no need to come down from his glorious throne; but he is pleased to represent the subject in this light to make a deeper impression upon the mind of man.

The destruction *was made known* to Abraham before it came to pass. We seldom undertake any thing important without making it known to our friends. Abraham was a friend of God, and God said, *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?* Gen. xviii. 17. Can I keep him ignorant of my designs? *The forward is abomination to the Lord; but his secret is with the righteous.* Prov. iii. 32. Pious men have early notice of approaching judgments, but when they publish the thing they are viewed as fools and madmen.

Abraham *interceded* for Sodom. Good men are inspired with God-like principles, and are not willing that any should perish. The intercession of Abraham was humble, modest, and successful. The Lord engaged that if ten righteous persons should be found he would spare the whole for the sake of them; but, alas, that number was not found!

Angels were sent to *warn Lot*, to aid his escape, and to destroy the place. When they came to Sodom, Lot knew not who they were; but, as strangers, they were invited to take shelter under his hospitable roof. At first they positively refused his generous offer, saying, *We*

will abide in the street all night. Ver. 2. This, no doubt, was their intention ; but being pressed greatly, they at last consented. They cannot, therefore, be charged with a lie, having had no intention to deceive their hospitable friend. Christianity recommends hospitality. *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers ; for thereby some, as Abraham and Lot, have entertained angels unawares.* Heb. xiii. 2. These angels soon informed Lot what God was about to do, and prepared him for the escape. They also directed him to warn his sons-in-law ; but he seemed unto them as one that mocked. Little did that sottish people imagine that the angels of God, with a full commission to destroy the place, were even then in their city ! They slept without fear upon the brink of destruction ; but it was not a night for Lot to sleep. Very early in the morning he was hurried away by the angels ; for the command to destroy the place was urgent, and they could do nothing till Lot was out of danger. Then, Lot having left the place, the awful work began ; which leads us to consider

II. THE DESTRUCTION ITSELF.

My hand trembles while I write. O dreadful day ; and yet but a faint emblem of that day

in which God will destroy the world by fire! On the destruction we may observe the following things: It was sudden, awful, universal, and without remedy.

The destruction of Sodom was *sudden*. Many, probably, were sleeping in their beds quite secure: a few, perhaps, were rising up, and about to enter upon the affairs of the day. In an instant a black cloud gathered, and the storm of vengeance rushed upon them like a mighty whirlwind. They had no time to flee: no time to implore mercy: not a moment allowed to prepare for eternity! Thus, they who neglect to improve time and opportunity, may look for sudden judgments in the end.

The destruction of Sodom was *awful*. Fire and brimstone were the instruments of the divine wrath. It is probable that it was a storm of thunder and lightning, of fire and hail; the earth at the same time cracking and opening beneath their feet. Their lusts had burned like fire, and fire was employed to burn both them and their lusts. Hell is a place of fire and brimstone; and Sodom, being like hell in wickedness, was burned with fire and brimstone. How justly may we exclaim, *O God thou art terrible out of thy holy places!* Psal. lxviii. 35.

The destruction of Sodom was *universal*. Not one soul escaped. Parents and children were all destroyed. The cities of the plain, the cattle, and that which grew upon the ground, all perished. Even Lot's wife who lingered, and looked back, fell a victim to the flames. How awful to think of this complete destruction ! How soon can God rid himself of his enemies ! They were all living in the morning, and all dead and gone before noon. Thus all the enemies of God will perish. No distinction was made in Sodom between the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the wise and the ignorant ; nor will God mak any distinction on account of outward circumstances in that day when the world will be judged by Jesus Christ.

The destruction of Sodom was *without remedy*. They suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. When God appears, who can provide a remedy against his plans and purposes of judgment ? The overthrow was everlasting. There never could be another Sodom in that place. The vile wretches could never come back, either to repent of their crimes, or to reform and turn to God. God has provided a remedy for fallen man in Jesus Christ ; but those

who neglect this remedy must perish for ever.

III. THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH FOLLOWED THE DESTRUCTION.

✓ We may suppose that the neighbouring countries would be *struck with terror*. The report would spread far and wide, and make sinners afraid. It is by the terrible judgments of God that men are taught the evil of sin, and the abhorrence in which it is held by a holy God. We hear of no other cities being abandoned to similar lusts. The nations would fear the God of Abraham. God always intends to warn others, by his judgments upon any particular people; and that judgment is a warning even to the present day.

Abraham went to look for an answer to his prayer, and *saw the destroying flames at a distance*. Prayer should never be offered up without a strong desire for an answer. Let us pray for lawful things in faith, expecting to receive. Abraham rose up early in the morning to see whether his prayers were answered; but seeing the smoke of Sodom, he knew that there were not ten righteous persons there. What would his feelings be for Sodom, and for Lot! He saw the judgments at a distance but they did not

come nigh him. The friends of God are always safe.

Zoar was spared. One good man *saved a city* ! Lot was first directed to the mountain ; but through earnest prayer he was permitted to remain in Zoar. Had he gone to the mountain, every soul in Zoar would have perished ! What dreadful terror must those people have felt when he informed them why they were spared. We may suppose that they would repent of their sins, and humble themselves before God, and that they would venerate Lot, through whom they were spared.

Lot's daughters after all *caused their father to sin*. Lot, indeed, must have been off his guard ; but it is a sad thing for children to tempt their parents. They had a plea for sin, and so has every sinner. Ah, how soon we forget judgments ! Nothing but love will lead to steady obedience. Fear is powerful while it lasts ; but, like a sudden blaze, it soon goes out. What became of Lot after this event is uncertain. Charity, *which hopeth all things*, would lead us to think that he repented of his sin, returned to his obedience, and died in peace. Thus may we die, and may all our frailties and sins be buried in eternal oblivion, through Jesus Christ, *Amen.*

ABRAHAM ABOUT to SLAY his SON.

.....
SERMON XVIII.
.....

GEN. xxii. 10.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife, to slay his son.

THE heathen nations were *foul* idolaters. Upon particular occasions they offered up human victims. Children were made to pass through the fire to *Moloch*. *The Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.* 2 Kings xvii. 31. How this abominable practice first took rise is not easy to determine. Some have thought, that confused traditions of Abraham offering up Isaac, gave rise to the practice. That

God required Abraham to offer up his son is certain; but it was to try him, and not to sanction the abominable practice of immolating children.

In this discourse we shall consider three things; Why God commanded Abraham to offer up his son: how Abraham complied with the command; and, what lessons we may learn from this transaction.

I. WHY DID GOD COMMAND ABRAHAM TO OFFER UP HIS SON?

The command was given to *try Abraham*. *For it came to pass after these things*, mentioned in the preceding chapters, *that God did tempt Abraham*. Gen. xxii. 1. The word tempt, in this passage, comes from a Hebrew word which signifies *to prove, to make experiment, and to try what a person is, or how he will act*. Abraham professed true religion; but the *sincerity* of his profession must be proved. He was a *believer*; but his *faith* must be proved. He loved God; but his *love* must be proved. He was obedient to God; but his *obedience* must be proved. It was a severe trial of *faith*, for many promises had been made, which, *humanly speaking*, could not be fulfilled in case of

Isaac's death. The trial of his love was severe, because Isaac was the son whom he loved. Nor was the trial of his obedience less severe, having to offer up Isaac with his own hands.

We may add that the command was given that *Abraham might become a bright example to believers of after ages.* God having a perfect knowledge of Abraham's character, had no need of proving him for his own satisfaction ; but as Abraham was to stand before men as an example, it was necessary for him to be proved in such a way as should make a deep impression upon their minds. Nothing is more powerful than example. Mere precepts, however good, may be deemed impracticable, and on this ground many vain excuses may be formed ; but when we see a thing done before our eyes, we are struck dumb, and have not one excuse to plead. In this case we have a proof as certain of Abraham's obedience, as if we had seen it with our eyes, because it is recorded in the faithful word of God.

II. HOW DID ABRAHAM COMPLY WITH THE COMMAND ?

However painful the command might be, *Abraham made no objection.* He might have plead-

ed that it was contrary to nature to offer up his son, and that the promises of God could not be fulfilled; but he was silent. All that he deemed necessary was a certain knowledge of God's will; for then his way was plain, and he knew it right to yield obedience to the high command. No doubt he was fully satisfied that the command was from the Lord. He would not have hearkened to any other voice than that of God. The Lord spake to him in a way which he had been accustomed to; and he was not like young Samuel, who had not learned to know the voice of the Lord.

As soon as the command was given *Abraham set about the work immediately.* It seems to have been in the night that the command was given, and he arose up early in the morning to put it into execution. We could not have blamed him had he lingered, like Lot in Sodom; but the Father of the faithful, was not a loiterer in the service of God. He left the business of his flocks and herds, and went directly upon the business of the Lord.

Resolved to obey God, *Abraham carefully guarded against hindrances.* He neither told Sarah, nor Isaac, nor his servants, what he was

about to do. Perhaps they would have opposed his pious resolution to put into execution the divine command. The maternal feelings of Sarah, especially, might have induced her to interpose ; but it does not appear that she was acquainted with her lord's intention. For want of prudence, we often make our way rough and unpleasant, and our duties become far more difficult than they otherwise might be. A multitude of counsellors may be safe in doubtful cases ; but when our way is plain, by a revelation from the Lord, we need no other counsel.

Abraham made no *ostentatious show* of his obedience. He might have called his friends and neighbours to witness his *heroical* piety ; but he knew that the Lord would be his witness, and that was enough for him. He had no desire to have human applause. Hypocrites desire nothing so much as the praise of men ; but those who are sincere of heart, desire above all things the approbation of the Lord. Jehu said, *Come see my zeal for the Lord.* 2. Kings x. 16. Let us carefully guard against a desire to be seen of men. Not that our conduct can be hid, for if we honour God, he will honour us before the people ; but our intentions

should ever be free from this base motive. It is worthy of remark, that Abraham did not suffer even his young men to witness his conduct upon this occasion ; for when they drew near the place where Isaac was to be offered up, he said to them, *Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship.*

Ver. 5.

Men of weak minds are apt to waver in the discharge of painful duties ; but *Abraham was persevering.* How many have begun well, who at length have tired and become faint in their minds ! but Abraham was steadfast to the end. He had time to reflect and to waver, for he had a long journey to perform before he could offer up his son ; but he did not waver a moment from first to last. The journey was performed, the altar erected, the wood prepared, Isaac was bound and laid upon the altar, and the hand was stretched forth to slay him ; when God interposed, and said, *Lay not thine hands upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him.*

Ver. 12. O what faith—what love to God—what obedience to the will of heaven ! We talk a great deal about duties : we complain bitterly of hardships ; but Abraham's obedience was silent and cheerful.

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III. WHAT LESSONS MAY WE LEARN FROM THIS TRANSACTION?

We learn from this transaction, that *the will of God should be a law to man*. We should be more anxious to know whether what we do be the will of God, than to pry into the reasons of it; for that being clearly determined, the other may be left. Whatever God wills, is not only good, but absolutely necessary, and when the will of God is known, man should instantly comply. We are apt to set up our *pretended* wisdom against God, as if we knew better what should be done than he can tell us; but Abraham manifested *real* wisdom, by making the will of God his sovereign law. Let us imitate his bright example, saying in all circumstances and upon all occasions, *Thy will be done*. Matt. vi. 10.

This transaction proves that *what the Lord requires is not impossible*. When God commands, he always gives strength to obey. He helps feeble man by the secret influences of his holy Spirit, so that nothing is wanted in difficult duties, but a willing mind. Power belongeth unto God, and he imparts that degree of power which is needful. Never was a case more difficult than this; but it was easy to Abraham,

because he had the help of God. Let the followers of Jesus take encouragement, God will afford them help in time of need.

The command to Abraham is a proof that the greatest favourites of heaven may be *severely tried*. Out of much tribulation the best of men must enter the kingdom of God. This world is not our rest. Let us recollect how Job, David, Daniel, and other holy men, were tried. And is it not fit that we should be tried? Should not every grace and every virtue be proved? Besides, heaven will be more welcome after these afflictions. There we shall look back with gratitude, and bless God for the severest affliction which we have experienced in this state of trial.

We learn from this account, that severe trials frequently arise from *peculiar comforts*. No doubt Abraham had more comfort in Isaac than in all other persons or things; but Isaac must be given up. The loss of his flocks and herds, and of his gold and silver, would have been trifling. We little know, when our affections are placed upon earthly comforts, the pangs they may cause before all is over. Jacob loved Joseph; but he was sold into Egypt.

David loved Absolom ; but he became a rebel, and died in disgrace,

The submission of Abraham teaches us, that it is both our wisdom and our interest to *submit* to the will of God in severe trials. The creature was never intended to be our chief good. At most it is but a subordinate good. We are in the hands of God, to whom we should leave all our concerns. When he has the rule over us, and chuses for us, all is well ; and submission to his will brings peace and joy in the most calamitous events.

It appears evident by this account that God, who gives the choicest blessings, may *take his gifts away*. We are but stewards, and our Lord may do what he will with his own. When Job had lost both his wealth and his children, he said, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.* Job. i. 21. The Lord prepared a gourd to cover the head of Jonah ; but a worm smote the gourd, and it withered. Thus all our comforts may be taken away ; but let us still rejoice in the Lord, and bless the God of our salvation.

We may infer from this account, that *dark*

duties are no objection against clear promises. Whether we can see or not, God will fulfil his word. Abraham judged so, and thought that God could even raise his son from the dead to accomplish his promises. We may have darkness, and no light; but God is all light, and his mysterious ways work the end designed, to the astonishment of short-sighted mortals.

Many promises are made to pious men, and we see in this account, that God will be faithful to his word, *though* we cannot *comprehend* how his faithfulness will appear. His promises have never failed, and never will fail. Heaven and earth will pass away; but the word of God will remain for ever. If any promise has not been fulfilled, it was conditional, and the condition upon which it was made was neglected; so that it was man that failed, and not a faithful God.

In reading this account, we see the propriety of studying *scripture characters*. Good characters are recorded for our imitation, and those which have been bad, are recorded for our warning. Let us improve both to the best of purposes. No doubt this solemn transaction is

recorded for our instruction. For, though we may not be called to offer up our children, yet, in painful duties, we are called to imitate the temper and conduct of Abraham in offering up his Son.

Here we also learn, that Man, whose life is forfeited to justice, *is spared through a sacrifice*. Many have considered Isaac as a type of Christ, and in some respects he certainly was; but in this important transaction, he represented men in general, whose life the justice of God might demand, on account of their crimes. The ram caught in the thicket, and which was actually sacrificed, was a type of Christ. The ram suffered in the place of Isaac; and Christ suffered in the place of man. The ram was provided to make a *typical* atonement, and Christ was provided to make a *real* atonement. But how could Isaac, whose life was spared, be a type of Jesus, who died on the cross? Had God delivered Jesus from the cross, there would have been a resemblance. Isaac was not to die for men, but only as a man. Jesus died for men, as the typical animal did, and probably upon the same mountain. Through him may we be saved forever! *Amen.*

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT.

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SERMON XIX.

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ACTS vii. 9, 10.

And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharoah king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house.

THE history of Joseph is both entertaining and instructive, and that man who can read it through without a tear, can scarcely be said to possess the common feelings of humanity. Joseph has been considered as a type of Jesus; and it is impossible to read his history without perceiving a striking resemblance in many important particulars; but the history of Joseph should be read, principally, as an astonishing display of that divine providence which presides over the affairs of men.

Our text will lead us to consider several important events in this history; and it may be divided into two parts: first, the conduct of the Patriarchs towards Joseph: and, secondly, the conduct of God towards him.

I. THE CONDUCT OF THE PATRIARCHS TOWARDS JOSEPH.

The word *Patriarch* signifies a *father*; and the sons of Jacob were so called, because they were the *fathers* of the tribes of Israel. Nine of them only were concerned in the horrid transaction which we are about to examine; for Benjamin was absent, and Reuben did not consent, having formed a plan for his brother's deliverance. *And Reuben said unto them, shed no blood, but cast him into this pit in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.* Gen. xxxvii. 22.

The Patriarchs *envied* Joseph. Envy is that uneasiness which a man feels at the prosperity and happiness of another; and it is one of the most tormenting passions to which human nature can be subject. It perpetually corrodes and tears the heart, by turning the happiness of others into a source of misery. It wastes the

life, and destroys the comfort of that man who suffers it to take root in his heart.

One cause of envy in the Patriarchs was the fond partiality of Joseph's father, *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age : and he made him a coat of many colours.* Gen. xxxvii. 3. That coat caused Joseph many a bitter sigh. Parents should carefully guard against blind partiality ; and if they feel partial to one child, on account of some promising appearances, they should not distinguish him by *a coat of many colours*, lest by exposing him to envy, they cause him to suffer as Joseph did.

Another cause of their envy was the dreams of Joseph. Those dreams were evidently of the Lord, who foresaw his future greatness, and made it known in this remarkable way. Joseph dreamed that he was to receive homage both from his father and his brethren : and when he related his dreams, *his brethren envied him ; but his father observed the saying.* Gen. xxxvii. 11. Out of scorn and contempt, the Patriarchs called him the dreamer. *Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore and let us slay him, and cast him into some*

pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. Gen. xxxvii. 19, 20.

Influenced by this diabolical passion, *they sold Joseph into Egypt.* They had intended to have murdered him, and no doubt would have done so but for the interference of Reuben and Judah. Judah at first was disposed to kill him, but a fair opportunity just then offering itself to dispose of him without shedding blood, he said, *What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh.* *And his brethren were content.* Gen. xxxvii. 26, 27. What a strange thing that men should buy and sell each other! Prisoners taken in war have often been sold for slaves; but here brothers, under the influence of envy, sell a brother. Surely their envy was like that of the devil, who is ever restless and miserable in beholding the happiness of men. O let us guard against this hellish principle, and carefully cultivate a spirit of benevolence and good-will, even towards our enemies! One crime frequently begets another, and when a man falls into sin, it is difficult to say where it may end. When the

Patriarchs had sold Joseph, to satisfy their cruel envy, they were under the necessity of inventing a lie to conceal their crime. The bloody coat was presented to Jacob, who wept, and lamented the loss of his son, supposing him to have been torn by some beast of prey. He knew the coat again, and said, *It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.* And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. Gen. xxxvii. 33, 34. Thus, they deceived their aged father; but God, who had beheld their vile conduct, could not be deceived.

II. THE CONDUCT OF GOD TOWARDS JOSEPH.

Joseph was sold, but *God was with him.* It is probable that Joseph feared God before this event happened, and if so, he had the consolations of religion, when all other consolations failed. He was removed far from his pious father; but the God of his father was with him. Distance of place often interrupts paternal kindness; but the kindness of God, our father, may be enjoyed in every place. Joseph was banished from his brethren, and from every domestic comfort; but he could not be banished from his God. How pleasing is

the thought, that the God whom we serve is not a local being, but a God who fills heaven and earth ! He is with us, though we do not see his form, and we enjoy his presence, though invisible. All good men have God with them wherever they go. He watches over them both by day and by night, and condescends to be their guardian and their faithful friend. While God is with us, we cannot want: while he is with us, we need not fear. He is far better than earthly parents, and more to be desired than either wealth or friends. No doubt Joseph worshipped the God of Jacob ; and Jacob's God was with him, to accept and bless that worship. He was nigh when Joseph prayed ; and he noticed the praises and thanksgivings of his servant.

God delivered Joseph out of all his afflictions. He had many painful afflictions in Egypt. He was tempted by a lewd woman, who, when her vile wishes could not be accomplished, blasted his character by lies and falsehood. He was cast into a dungeon. *But the Lord was with Joseph, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.* Gen. xxxix. 21. There Joseph interpreted the dreams of the chief Butler and the chief Baker, his fellow-prisoners. *Pharaoh restored the chief Butler to his butlership again ; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's*

hand: but he hanged the chief Baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the chief Butler remember Joseph, but forgot him. Gen. xl. 21—23. Afflictions attend good men wherever they go; but God delivers them. He delivered Joseph not once only, but always. He delivered him out of *all* his afflictions. He had lost his father; but he lived to see him again. He had been hated by his brethren; but the day came when they loved, honoured, and bowed down to him. He had been disgraced; but great honour followed his disgrace. He had been forgotten; but God caused him to be remembered. He had been in a prison; but was advanced next to the throne of Pharaoh. What wonderful changes! What astonishing deliverances!

The God of Joseph gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Pharaoh dreamed, but neither he nor his wise men could interpret. The report of Pharaoh's dreams brought Joseph to the recollection of the chief Butler, and he was sent for by the king. Pharaoh's dreams, like those of Joseph, were of God; and God gave Joseph wisdom to interpret, and the interpretation gave him favour in the sight of Pharaoh. Thus all Jo-

seph's honours were of God, who, when he pleases, can raise his servants high in the esteem of earthly monarchs.

Pharaoh influenced by the God of Joseph made him governor over the land of Egypt, and all his house. It is not often necessary for good men to be exalted in this world; but when God sees fit, how easy it is for him to exalt them! God makes men great, that they may be useful. In this instance Joseph was exalted for the good of others; he was *blessed*, that he might be made a *blessing*. In that high station, Joseph, as an instrument, saved the lives of the Egyptians. During seven years of plenty he laid up sufficient stores of food for seven years of famine.—Let the prudent foresight of Joseph teach us to lay up stores of heavenly treasure. O that we could see thousands, *Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life!* 1 Tim. vi. 19.

Joseph in his exalted station was made an instrument of saving his own family. The famine reached Canaan, and was felt by good old Jacob. The brethren of Joseph came down to buy corn, and they were amply supplied. It

was on one of those journeys that the prophetic dreams of Joseph were fulfilled ; for his brethren *bowed themselves to him to the earth*. Gen. xliii. 26. Jacob also came down into Egypt, and was richly provided for in the land of Goshen. *Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.* Gen. xlvii. 12. It is very observable, that God often uses means to accomplish his purposes, which are very unlikely to men. Here we see a poor despised Hebrew raised to high honour and power, that he might save a great nation and a chosen family. A poor slave, a degraded prisoner, raised next to the throne of Pharaoh ! Happy is the land which hath such a governor ! All things prosper where wisdom and piety are found in the rulers of a nation. Happy the parent who hath such a son ! Happy the brethren who have such a brother ! And happy, thrice happy are we, who have the lovely Jesus for our Saviour !

To conclude : Let us learn to rejoice in the prosperity of other men, and to crush the spirit of envy in the bud. Let us also rejoice in the presence of God. It is no matter where we pitch our tents, whether in Canaan, in Egypt,

or in the wilderness, if God be with us. There is a gracious God who over-rules *bad purposes* for *good ends*. Those who are near to us may design our ruin; but all the designs of God are to bless and save our souls. Innocency and uprightness shall finally triumph; and sin, however artfully concealed, will be brought to light, and in the end, without repentance, will disgrace and destroy the sinner. God still governs the world. Jesus still cares for men. The Jews sought to destroy Jesus; but God highly exalted him at his own right hand, where he ever lives to bless his people. *When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; and what he saith to you, do.* Gen. xli. 55. Thus let us go to the blessed Jesus, and what he saith unto us let us do with cheerfulness. Then, being fed with that bread which came down from heaven, we shall live for ever!

THE
FINAL LOT OF MEN.

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SERMON XX.

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DAN. xii. 13.

But go thou thy way until the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

DANIEL, *a man greatly beloved*, was favoured with many important prophetic visions; but, when the words of our text were addressed to him, those visions closed, and, as a faithful servant, he was dismissed, with the promise of a suitable reward. Thus, when we have done our work in the present life, we shall be dismissed from the body; but God will not forget the reward which he has graciously pro-
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mised. In the end of the days we shall stand in our lot, and enjoy a goodly inheritance.

We shall consider Daniel's dismission ; " go thou thy way until the end be"—and, then, the promise of rest, with a suitable lot at the end of the days.

I. DANIEL'S DISMISSION ; GO THOU THY WAY UNTIL THE END BE.

When every necessary truth had been revealed to Daniel, the visions closed, and the angel said, *Go thou thy way.* Daniel, though far advanced in years, was to go back into the active and busy scenes of life, to mix with men, and to act that part which might best promote his own happiness, the good of men, and the glory of God. Like him, pious men often go away from the sweetest intercourse with God, both in their closets and in the public assemblies of the saints, to transact business with men, and to discharge the great and important duties of life. This conduct is perfectly consistent with the purest precepts of religion. The best interests of man are as much promoted by civil and social duties, as by prayer and praise. Both are absolutely necessary ; and he who neglects the duties which he owes to

men, can never be said to perform the duties which he owes to God.

But, amidst all the active duties of life, and the sweet enjoyments of religion, let us often recollect, that every thing in this world will have an end. *Go thou thy way* said the angel, *until the end be.* Soon there will be an end of all our present labours, sufferings, and enjoyments. Life itself, though protracted to the utmost period, will soon end. The prophecies, which look forward to very remote and distant periods, will end in a full and exact accomplishment. Yea, the world, and every thing which it contains, will shortly come to an end. *The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Happy is that man, who, amidst all the vicissitudes of life, is ever found in the path of duty. The rapid flow of time, which is a source of pain and grief to the disobedient, gives him no uneasiness. He feels no tormenting fear of death, or of the unseen world. With faith in Jesus Christ, and love to God and men, he steadily pursues his way; knowing that he shall

rest at the end of his day, and stand in his lot when time shall be no more. Let us now consider,

II. THE PROMISE OF REST, WITH A SUITABLE LOT AT THE END OF THE DAYS.

The grave is a place of rest. *There the wicked cease from troubling ; and there the weary be at rest.* Job iii. 17. The body, after all its labours and sufferings, quietly rests in the silent grave, until the resurrection of the dead. Then it will awake and arise, to be actively employed in a better world. In that world, activity will prove a source of perpetual delight. Daniel has long been at rest in the grave, and we, who are now engaged in the toils of life, shall soon enter *the house appointed for all living.* Job. xxx. 23.

While the body of a righteous man rests in the grave, his spirit rests in paradise. It is said of him, when his frail body perishes, *He shall enter into peace.* Isa. lvii. 2. The intermediate state, between death and the resurrection, is a state of sweet rest, and settled peace ; but the enjoyments of that state, bear no proportion to the glory and happiness which will follow the resurrection of the dead. Then, and not till then, the righteous will enter upon

their full reward. In the mean time, both Daniel, and all the pious dead, wait, in a world of spirits, with pleasing hope, for their final lot.

At the end of the days, when the prophecies are fulfilled, and time is no longer, every man will stand in his proper lot. The end of the days denotes the final period of all mundane affairs. Time is divided into days and weeks, months and years; but, when time ends, these divisions end, and an awful eternity begins. Then our state, whatever it may be, will be fixed and unalterable. How solemn and awful is this thought! Let us often dwell upon it, with deep seriousness, and make it our constant care to do all things in reference to that eternal world, where *death is swallowed up in victory*. 1 Cor. xv. 54.

Lots have been used, by divine appointment, to settle doubtful and intricate affairs. The scape-goat was chosen by *Lot*. Lev. xvi. 8. The land of Canaan was divided amongst the Israelites by *lot*. Numb. xxvi. 55, 56. When Jonathan tasted a little honey, in a great battle between Israel and the Philistines, he was discovered by the *lot*. 1 Sam. xiv. 42. The *lot* decided controversies. Prov. xviii. 18. The

lot fell upon Jonah, and he was cast into the sea. Jonah i. 7. And, an apostle was chosen by *lot*, to succeed Judas the traitor. Acts j. 26. Hence it is evident, that to leave a thing to the *lot*, is to leave it wholly to the disposal of the Lord. *The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* Prov. xvi. 33.

In the following passages the word *lot* signifies an inheritance: *Come up with me into my lot.* Judges i. 3. *Thou maintainest my lot.* Psal. xvi. 5. *The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.* Psal. cxxv. 3. The word in our text signifies an inheritance, and evidently alludes to the division of Canaan by *lot*. The lot of Daniel, therefore, is that inheritance which God will give him in the eternal world; and that, no doubt, will be a happy lot with all the saved of the Lord.

From these observations, we cannot be at a loss to determine what is meant by a man standing in his lot at the end of the days. That lot is the state and situation which the Lord, as a righteous judge, will appoint to every man in the day of judgment. Then every thing will be arranged and settled upon the principles of

unerring wisdom and impartial justice. All that has been wrong, in this lower world, will be rectified ; and God will appear, in the eyes of all rational and intelligent beings, as a God of wisdom, justice, power, and love.

In fixing the eternal states of men, God will not be guided either by precarious accident, or blind partiality. Such are his unbounded perfections, that he cannot do wrong. Whatever, therefore, either our rewards or punishments may be, they will be nicely balanced and adjusted by a Being who cannot err. Our conduct, in this state of probation, constantly viewed by the all piercing eye of our judge, will determine our final lot. Upon this plan, we may safely leave ourselves, our relations, and friends, to the disposal of God.

That we may have a happy lot in the eternal world, let us carefully imitate the faith and obedience of Daniel. Many in the hurry of business, and exposed to sensual pleasures, totally neglect the duties of religion ; but Daniel, busily employed in the courts and councils of several great monarchs, where sensual pleasures were carried to the greatest excess, *served God continually*. He is one of those few persons against

whom the inspired writings bring no charge of guilt. His whole deportment, from youth to old age, was such as became a *man of God*. In short, wisdom and piety, righteousness and truth, firmness and perseverance, are striking traits in his character.

Too many professors of religion, expect a happy lot in heaven, through the Mediation of Christ, without a holy life; but their false hope must end in painful disappointment. Christ, who died to redeem us from iniquity, saves all who depend upon him, from inward and outward sin. Daniel knew that *Messiah the Prince would be cut off, but not for himself*—that he would *make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity*—and, while he was living in all holiness, humbly depended upon the promised Saviour. While we act upon the same plan, we may look forward with certain hope, for *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* 1 Pet. i. 4.

SIN PUNISHED WITH DEATH.

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SERMON XXI.

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ROM. vi. 23.

For the wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE ruin of man is of himself; but his recovery is of the Lord. The prophet Hosea bears ample testimony to this important truth ; *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.* Hos. xiii. 9. Our text teaches the same truth. *The wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Here are two things : first, the wages of sin
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is death : secondly, the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.

Sin is the *transgression of a law*. A law may be either human or divine. When we transgress a human law, we sin against man ; when we transgress a divine law, we sin against God. A law may be transgressed either by doing what is expressly forbidden, or by neglecting to do what is plainly commanded. Hence, the common distinction between sins of commission and sins of omission, appears to be very proper. Understanding sin in either sense, it deserves death ; in either sense, death is its proper wages.

Death may be considered either as the loss of the life of God in the soul, as the separation of soul and body, or as the final separation of soul and body from God in a future world. When man sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, he was punished with spiritual death. His soul was cut off from God : his understanding became dark, his will rebellious, his affections carnal, and his whole soul polluted. This was not all : his body became mortal, having received that death-wound which could not be

cured by any means which he could use. All his posterity are born into the world in the same state: dead to God in their souls, and in their bodies subject to death. Living and dying in this state, all sinners will be cut off from God for ever. They will be cast into the *lake of fire*, which is the second death.

It is awful to sin against God! We may view sin as a trifling thing; but in reality, it is an evil of the greatest magnitude. It is clear that no man who wilfully transgresses the divine law, can be in a state of union with God; and it is equally clear, that where there is no union with God, there can be no spiritual life. If we separate a branch from a tree, or cut off a limb from the body, death immediately follows. How then can the spirit live in a state of separation from God? It must necessarily die.

How needful, then, it must appear for a wicked man to turn from his wickedness that he may live! Let us now cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Let us now forsake every sin. Henceforth let us dread sin more than the face of a serpent—more than a devouring beast—more than a raging flame! These can only kill the body, which is already dying; but sin may destroy the soul for ever and ever!

To see the sad effects of sin, let us view all the misery of man in his fallen state. View him in deep afflictions: view him in the pains and agonies of death: view him in the dreadful torments of hell, without hope, and lost to all eternity! Then let us tremble lest sin should prove our ruin. It has *ruined* thousands and millions; and it will *ruin* all who live and die under its baneful influences.

II. THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

The phrase, eternal life, implies both a life of grace on earth, and a life of glory in heaven. John the baptist refers to a state of grace in the soul, where he says, *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.* John iii. 36. The apostle Paul refers to a future state of glory, where he says, *He that soweth to the spirit shall reap life everlasting.* Gal. vi. 8. We shall not wonder that the same expression is applied to both these states, when we consider that they are very much alike, and stand closely connected with each other. Grace in the soul, is glory in its beginning: glory in heaven, is grace in perfection. A believer hath everlasting life now, both by a clear title, and a sweet foretaste. A measure of heavenly joy is brought

down into his soul, and he looks forward with pleasing hope to the full enjoyment.

While we look forward to eternal life in heaven, let us examine both the nature and duration of that life. It is called *life*, because the soul will live in a happy *union* with God : it will live in an *enjoyment* of God : it will live in the *company* and *society* of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect : it will live a life of *spotless purity*, a life of *exalted glory*. That life will not be followed by death. Every thing here is short. Our natural life is but *a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* James iv. 14. The life of heaven will know no end. When millions of ages are past, it will be but just beginning. It will continue as long as God continues, which will be for ever and ever. The duration of heaven's glory, crowns all. Fading crowns of glory would be of little value ; but the crown which God has promised will never fade. The most remote prospect of death would put a damp upon the joys of heaven ; but the inhabitants of that place have no such prospect. That which puts a damp upon the world's glory, is the death which follows : how desirable, then, must that perfection of happiness be, which will never, never end !

Eternal life is the gift of God. It cannot be purchased : but we may have it without either money or price. Were it to be purchased, who could obtain it? The sum would be greater than any man could raise. A world, a thousand worlds, would not be of sufficient value to purchase eternal life. We should rejoice that eternal life is not the gift of man, whose narrow prejudices would dispose of it with blind partiality. God will give eternal life to them who are made fit for it by holiness. He has his favourites ; but they are such as are like himself. Every man who will forsake sin, and seek holiness, may become a favourite of heaven. Repent, believe, love, and obey, and eternal life will be thine.

God gives eternal life through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has undertaken the cause of sinful man. He atoned for sin, by shedding his most precious blood upon mount calvary ; he rose, from the dead, and ascended into heaven to intercede. Had it not been for his gracious undertakings, the mercy of God would never have reached a sinful world. Devils, having no mediator, are out of the reach of mercy ; and man would have been in the same dreadful state, if it had not been for our Lord Jesus

Christ. Hence we see a need of coming to God through him : our prayers and praises go up with acceptance, in his ever-adored name.

Let us be humbled under a deep sense of our sins and follies. We have deserved death ; but through mercy we are yet alive. We have deserved hell ; but we are yet on praying ground. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.* Lam. iii, 22. O let us seek eternal life before it be too late ! The season of mercy will soon pass away, The judge is at the door ; and an awful eternity will soon open to our view. The vilest sinners if truly penitent, *may be encouraged ; for Jesus died for all, and God is merciful to all.* May every contrite sinner hasten to Jesus, and *live for ever.* *He hath said, for the encouragement of such, I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.* John xi. 25, 26.

THE
MASTER'S CALL FOR MARY.

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SERMON XXII.
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JOHN xi. 28.

The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

OUR Lord was very intimate with the family of Mary and Martha, and Lazarus. Lazarus, whom Jesus loved, was seized with sickness, and the two sisters sent immediately to Jesus, saying, *Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* Ver. 3. For wise reasons Jesus delayed going till Lazarus was dead. Then he went to Bethany, and Martha, as soon as she heard that he was coming, went out to meet him. A very interesting conversation took place between them,

at the end of which she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, *The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*

Let us consider, first, the title given to our Lord: secondly, the ends of this journey: and thirdly, the enquiry for Mary.

I. THE TITLE GIVEN TO OUR LORD.

Martha calls him *Master*, which implies two things: first, that he was a teacher, and secondly, that he was a governor.

When Christ appeared in human nature, the world stood in great need of a teacher. The heathens were sunk into senseless and shameful idolatry; and the Jews had nearly lost a knowledge of those blessed truths which had been taught by Moses and the prophets. They had lost the spirit in the letter, and the substance in the shadow. Their religion was generally mere outside shew. They expected a temporal kingdom of great grandeur: but the spiritual kingdom of Messiah was overlooked.

Christ was such a teacher as the world had never seen before. He taught nothing that was unimportant. He taught in plain language,

which the most ignorant might understand. There is a clearness, strength, and brevity in all his discourses, which is worthy of the imitation of every christian minister. He taught with great authority, and not as the scribes ; and all his words were pure truth, without any mixture of error.

The church is a large family, in which Christ is Lord and Master. Every individual in this family acknowledges his authority, and cheerfully submits to his government. As a Master, he is mild and gentle ; but firm and stable. The work which he appoints is easy, being exactly proportioned to the strength of his followers ; and it is that kind of work which always affords the purest delight. His *ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace.* Prov. iii. 17. While we look up to him as our Ruler, we may rely upon his protection in danger ; and in want he will plentifully supply us out of the riches of his fulness.

II. THE ENDS OF THIS JOURNEY.

Our blessed Lord had many important ends in view in this journey to Bethany : in the first place, *he went to comfort a distressed family.* Death had entered into their habitation, and

caused them to weep and mourn. How often are our comforts in life interrupted by sickness and death! One goes from us after another, and we are left behind to grieve like Mary and Martha. In these troubles, how cheering is the presence of a friend, though he may have no power to restore our loss: how welcome, then, the presence of Jesus, who could restore Lazarus to his disconsolate sisters! He did not leave them comfortless. Hearing of their distress, he went to comfort them.

Again, he went to set his followers an example of sympathy. We sometimes blame those who shed a tear over suffering humanity, without recollecting that upon this sad occasion, *Jesus wept*. Ver. 35. He wept, and we may weep. Let us, when we hear of distress, hasten to sympathize with the distressed! Let us indulge, in a proper degree, these fine feelings of our nature. The time may come when we shall want the tender feelings of our christian brethren. We dare not indeed yield to immoderate sorrow, as men without hope; but we abhor the stoical and unfeeling spirit of some professors. Surely they are ignorant both of the spirit of christianity, and of the temper of Jesus.

But the principal end of this journey was *to work a miracle*. Miracles were wrought by Jesus to convince men that he was the true Messiah. In this miracle he intended both to confirm the faith of his disciples, and to convince the Jews that he was indeed the Christ. He said to his disciples, when Lazarus was dead, *I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe.* Ver. 15. This was the most notable miracle that Jesus ever wrought upon any occasion. Lazarus had been in the grave four days, and Martha very properly observed, *by this time he stinketh.* Ver. 39. A stone lay upon the cave in which he was buried, and he was bound hand and foot with grave-cloths. But all these obstacles were nothing to Jesus, who cried with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth!* Ver. 43. And at his word the dead came forth ; and Jesus said, *Loose him, and let him go.* Ver. 44. This miracle was wrought before many witnesses. The disciples were present, and many of the Jews who had come to comfort Mary and Martha. Some believed ; but others, (strange to tell !) actuated by deep-rooted malice, went to inform the pharisees. Then the chief priests and pharisees gathered a council, and from that day forth they sought to put him to death. *Jesus there-*

fore, walked no more openly among the Jews.

One would suppose that the disciples could never more doubt whether Jesus was the Christ; but, alas, the human heart is prone to unbelief! After the resurrection of Jesus, notwithstanding all the miracles which they had seen, they expressed themselves in the following doubting language, *We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.* Luke xxiv. 21. O what need we have to pray that God would increase our faith, and help our unbelief! We are often fools and slow of heart to believe what is written; and if it be thus with us, in mere historical matters, how much more so in that faith which bringeth salvation!

III. THE ENQUIRY FOR MARY.

He calleth for thee, said Martha. Here we may remark, that Mary was *greatly beloved.* The reason of Christ's peculiar regard for Mary was her singular piety. Christ loves nothing but what is excellent; and therefore wherever we find peculiar expressions of his regard for persons, we may conclude that those persons have something excellent in their temper and conduct.

This enquiry proves that *Jesus thinks of his*

followers when they are at a distance from him. Mary was still in the house, and perhaps knew not that her Lord was come, or, if she knew, her sorrow was so great as to prevent her going forth to meet him ; but Jesus said, "Where is Mary ? Tell her to come." Jesus is now in the heavenly world ; but he thinks upon his followers on earth. We do not see him with our bodily eyes ; but he sees us, and knows all our sorrows.

We learn from this enquiry that it is *the will of Jesus that his followers should be with him.* He has called us by his grace, and we can rejoice in his salvation. Death will soon remove us hence ; and then it may be said to every believer, *The Master is come, and calleth for thee.* O blessed summons ! Happy day, when Jesus calls his followers home ! He has said, *I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also.* John xiv. 3. We shall live with our Master when this short life is ended, and enjoy all the blessedness of which our sanctified spirits may be capable. Blessed world ! where the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us to living fountains of water ; and where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

That we may go to that blessed world, let us, like Mary, chuse the better part, the one thing needful ! Let us make choice of Christ for our Master, and steadily follow him through evil and good report. Then Christ will be ours, and heaven will be ours for ever. A few more trials and temptations: a few more conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and our Master will receive us to himself, where trials and temptations, losses and disappointments, will afflict us no more for ever. *Amen.*

FAMILY RELIGION.

SERMON XXIII.

PSALM ci. 2.

I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

MANY families, even in Britain, where religious knowledge is more widely spread than in any other country, are as destitute of religion, as the numerous herds of cattle which roam upon the forest. How can we account for this? May we not justly blame the masters of those families? How unlike David, who, amidst all the great duties of a public life, resolved *to walk within his house with a perfect heart.*

Let us consider the walk of a pious man within his house ; and the probable effects which his walk may produce in his family.

I. THE WALK OF A PIOUS MAN WITHIN HIS HOUSE.

There is, too frequently, a great difference between a man's walk before the world, and his walk within his house. Before the world he appears prudent, just, and good; but within his house imprudent, unjust, and wicked. Public opinion weighs more with him than the opinion of his family. Hence he studiously deceives the public; but throws off the mask before his domestics. His family, influenced either by natural affection, or a fear of his resentment, conceal his real character, and help him to deceive the world. But, a wretch of this description, though unknown to men, is fully known to God, who will appoint him a portion with hypocrites: *there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Matt. xxiv. 51.

The walk of a man *within his house*, includes his whole conduct, both civil and religious, in the bosom of his own family. There, could we follow him, we should be able to develope his real character; as his tempers, words, and

works, within his house, are generally without disguise. Every one in his house, except the undiscerning infant, witnesses, from day to day, his rising up and lying down.—his going out and coming in—and all the steps he takes, both in temporal things, and in those things which relate to the eternal world.

To walk with a *perfect heart*, implies genuine simplicity and godly sincerity. A pious man professes obedience to God—love and respect to his family—and a desire to do good to all men. The sincerity of his profession appears evident in his daily walk within his house; and those who know him best, admire him most. Under his roof God is honoured—peace and happiness abound—and plans of public usefulness are formed.

David resolved to give his family a proof that he loved and served God *himself*. They neither heard anything from his lips, nor saw anything in his life, which clashed with the laws of his God. Both his tempers and conduct harmonized with the profession which he made before men. How admirable is consistency between profession and practice! Where this is found, calumny itself cannot fix a stain.

Thus, the man who walks within his house with a perfect heart, is *a bright example* of religion to his family. They see religion exemplified, and finely illustrated, in every action of his life. All its divine charms appear in their native lustre, and produce admiration and love. There cannot be a greater blessing to any family, than a master who conducts himself upon these principles. Compared with this, the finest gold, in point of real value, is but dross and dung.

Such a man will institute, in his family, those *forms of religion* which may appear best calculated to lead his family to God. He will frequently call them together to read the holy scriptures—to sing hymns of praise—and to offer up prayer and supplication to God. And that these forms may prove useful, he studies to make them, in every respect, as agreeable as possible; knowing how many, by severe forms, have created disgust against all that is good.

These forms are accompanied with prudent and interesting *instructions* upon general and important subjects; and, in addition to general instructions, a pious man often instructs each individual of his family apart, in those particu-

lar duties which are absolutely and essentially necessary to salvation. His own mind being richly stored with religious knowledge, he imparts it freely to every one who is placed under his care.

The instructions of such a man are followed by *commands*. It is said of Abraham, *I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.* Gen. xviii. 19. Parental authority, wisely directed, has great influence. A pious parent insists upon outward decorum, while he recommends the life and power of vital godliness. He cannot give spiritual life to his family; but he uses the means, and leaves the rest to God,

If commands, and well-timed advice fail, a man of this description adds *reproofs* and *corrections*. Solomon says, *He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.* Prov. xiii. 24. His corrections, however, are prudently administered. They are inflicted at proper times, and are proportioned to the crimes which may have been committed. Want of caution, in these respects, frequently defeats the designs of corrective punishment,

II. THE PROBABLE EFFECTS WHICH HIS WALK MAY PRODUCE IN HIS FAMILY.

A family governed by a pious man, commonly prospers in *temporal* things. Every one is trained up in the habit of industry, frugality, and honesty. These habits promote health and wealth, and every comfort that this world can afford. Afflictions, for wise reasons, may be laid upon such a family; but, in general, they abound in the enjoyment of necessary good things. *The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.* Psal. xxxiv. 10.

At the same time, *religion* frequently takes deep root in such families. They learn to love, honour, and obey their creator—to be just in their dealings with men—and to be temperate, sober, and chaste. There is more truth in the words of the *wise man* than many parents will allow: *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it.* Prov. xxii. 6. There may be a few exceptions to this rule; but, generally, a prudent and pious education, produces the most happy effects.

These things render a family *useful* in the world. Those who are connected with them, whether by blood, by marriage, by friendship,

or by commerce, have cause to bless God. Their influence is extensively felt; and many are induced to follow their example. In this way religion spreads from house to house; and the happy effects of one man's piety, through the blessing of God, may reach to thousands.

Reputation necessarily follows piety and usefulness. All, except the most worthless, both think and speak well of such families. They stand high in the esteem of wise and good men; the tongue of slander is silenced; and the vilest of men secretly admire them. Who would not wish to share these honours? The artful policy of wicked families, to keep up their reputation, proves how much real worth is esteemed, even by those who dare not pursue its excellencies.

But, what is of most importance, God approves of such families. He looks down from heaven, his holy habitation, with smiles of approbation. They are lovely in his sight, and are favoured with his special presence. When Jesus was upon earth, he honoured the pious family of *Mary* and *Martha* with much of his company; and when he comes again to judge the *quick and dead*, such families will receive peculiar tokens of his favour.

God, who approves of such families, sends

down upon them the choicest *blessings* both of providence and grace. He supplies their wants—protects them by night and by day—and will finally call them up to join the family of heaven. There their piety, friendship and happiness, will be perfected. Death may separate them for a few years; but they will meet again in a happier world to part no more. While they live together here, the special presence of God, like the *Ark of the covenant* in the house of *Obeb-edom*, will secure them a blessing. *The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.* 1 Chron. xiii. 14.

Masters of families, suffer the word of exhortation. Much, very much, depends upon you. Your families are either blessed or cursed through your instrumentality. Now begin to act wisely. You have a great and weighty charge committed to your care; and you will have an awful account to give on a future day. Success may not always follow your well-meant endeavours to promote the happiness of your families; but make the attempt in the name of the Lord, and say with pious Joshua, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Josh. xxiv. 15. *Amen.*

JOHN

In the SPIRIT on the LORD'S DAY.

.....
SERMON XXIV.
.....

REV. i. 10.

I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day.

MINISTERS of the Gospel in the first ages of christianity, were constantly exposed to bonds and imprisonment, banishment and death. John, the beloved disciple of our Lord, was banished by the *emperor Domitian*, a proud and cruel tyrant, to the *Isle of Patmos*, in the *Ægean sea*, now called the *Archipelago*. There he received a revelation of all the great events which should take place, from that time to the

final consummation of all things. The day on which Jesus rose from the dead, was then held sacred in all the christian churches; and John, though banished from his fellow-christians, observed it with sacred solemnity. When Jesus appeared, on his own day, to reveal the astonishing events contained in this book, he found his servant John engaged in spiritual worship.

Let us, first, make a few general observations upon the Lord's day; and then, secondly, consider what is implied in being in the spirit on that day.

I. GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE LORD'S DAY.

Every day in the year is the Lord's, and should be honoured, as such, by all the children of men. *The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.* Psal. lxxiv. 16. But, in the beginning of the world, the seventh day of the week was sanctified as a holy sabbath unto the Lord. God having created the world in six days, the seventh was set apart as a day of rest—as a fit day to commemorate the works of creation—and as a day of religious worship. The pious Patriarchs, probably, observed that sacred day, though no mention is made of it in the written word.

Under the mosaic dispensation, many particular seasons, such as the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, were set apart for the grateful commemoration of great and happy events. Those seasons, being of divine appointment, were religiously observed by all the pious Jews; and they had a happy tendency to promote both the honour of God, and the union of his people: and in that way divine mercies and miracles were perpetuated from one generation to another.

After the commencement of Christianity, both the ancient sabbath and the Jewish festivals were laid aside; and the first day of the week, was observed, by all the followers of Jesus, as a day of religious rest and public worship. The reason of this alteration, was, the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the week, which day was afterwards, very appropriately, called the **LORD'S DAY**. On that day the whole Christian world, in honour of Jesus' resurrection, held their sacred assemblies. This may be proved both from the scriptures, and from the most ancient Christian writers.

That the primitive churches assembled on the **LORD'S DAY** to break bread, and to hear

the preaching of the word, appears clearly from the following passage : *Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.* Acts xx. 7. The first day of the week, on which they constantly assembled, was judged to be a proper time to lay in store all they could spare for charitable purposes. Upon this subject the Apostle Paul gives the following direction : *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye : upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.* 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

Ignatius, who was made Bishop of Antioch, in the year 68, says, “ Let us not Jewishly sabbatize, but let us rest spiritually ; and, instead of the old sabbath, let every lover of Christ celebrate the **LORD'S DAY**, the best and most eminent of days, in which the **Lord** rose.” **JUSTIN MARTYR**, a famous apologist for christianity, in the second century, says, “ On the day which is called **sunday**, all, both of the country and city assemble together, where we preach and pray, and discharge all the other usual parts of divine worship.” In the fourth century,

CONSTANTINE issued an edict, obliging all the Roman Empire to observe the LORD'S DAY, in memory of those things which were done by the common saviour of men. And CHRISOSTOM says, "The first day of the week is to be observed by christians, as the LORD'S DAY."

What an unspeakable blessing it is that we have one day in seven for religious purposes ! It is evident, from the institution of the sabbath, in the beginning of the world, that God designed this to be the case ; but, on account of the spherical form of the earth, it is impossible for that day to be observed, precisely at the same time, all over the world. The sun is always rising upon one part of the globe and setting to another ; and at the same moment it is mid-day to one people, and mid-night to another. Hence it appears highly unreasonable to lay great stress either upon the exact time this day should begin, or the exact time it should end ; but it is clearly evident, that one day in seven, in every nation, should be devoted to the Lord.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD'S DAY ?

To be in the spirit may imply, either some

spiritual employment, such as meditation, prayer, and praise; or some particular extacy, rapture, or divine manifestation. It is obvious in this account, that John was in the spirit before the vision opened, and consequently that we have nothing to do, in the present enquiry, with the extacies or raptures which followed. But, like John, all professing christians should engage in a serious, spiritual, and heavenly frame, in the religious duties of the **LORD'S DAY**.

Worldly business, except that which is absolutely necessary, *is entirely laid aside*, by all who are in the spirit on the **LORD'S DAY**. When, therefore, we see professors of religion doing work on that day which might have been done before—when we see them buying and selling, and planning and contriving to gain wealth, we naturally ask, How can they be in the spirit? These pursuits prove, to every attentive observer, that such people are more anxious to gain the world than to enjoy the blessings of christianity.

Those who are in the spirit, on the **LORD'S DAY**, *carefully shun all company, except that which is truly religious*. A good man, indeed, never chuses sinful company. Business some-

times renders it necessary ; but the day of the Lord sets him free. Those, therefore, who voluntarily associate with carnal men, on that day, are not in the spirit. They neither want instruction nor edification. The honour of the Redeemer is no part of their plan. The only difference they make between this and other days, is, the substitution of pleasure for business.

On that blessed day all books, except those which relate to the things of God, are conscientiously laid aside by spiritual worshippers. Books, like company, have a powerful effect upon the mind. Many books may be read on other days, which the mind, in a spiritual frame, deems highly improper on the LORD'S DAY. The Book of God raises the soul from earth to heaven, and when we are *in the spirit*, we feel but little relish for any other. Nevertheless, both on this and other days, a pious man may read those valuable works, which explain and enforce the sacred records.

The state of a man's mind appears in his words. Nothing, therefore, can be a stronger proof that the mind is not in a spiritual frame, than wordly, light, trifling conversation. But who observes this ? Do not the generality of

professors, even on the sacred day of the Lord, converse largely and freely upon the most trifling and unimportant subjects? At the same time those vastly important truths, which relate to present and eternal salvation, are seldom introduced.

There are public assemblies for religious worship on the day of the Lord, and those who are in the spirit are *cheerful and constant attendants*, except prevented by absolute necessity. In those assemblies, they draw nigh to God in contemplation, prayer, and praise. They hear his word—commemorate the sufferings of Jesus in the holy *Eucharist*—feel the divine presence, and rejoice in his love. Those places, to the truly spiritual are like BETHEL, The house of God, and the gate of heaven. Gen. xxviii. 17.

Returning from places of worship, those who are in the spirit, *collect their families together, and engage with them in various acts of spiritual worship*. In such families every one, whether child or servant, is trained up for the Lord. If, indeed, the masters and directors of families are carnal, this cannot be done; but in that case the truly spiritual will retire, and discharge those duties in the closet, which should be performed by the whole family.

Finally, to be in the spirit on the LORD'S DAY, implies that we worship God in spirit and in truth—that we give up ourselves, wholly, to the influences and directions of the spirit of God—and that we do all in our power, on that day, to promote the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom. Let us, then, examine ourselves, on this important subject. Do we observe this day as christians? Do we honour our triumphant saviour on his own day? Or are we spending that day in dressing and decorating the body—in eating and drinking—in amusements and unsanctified pleasures? If we abuse and pervert this day, our Lord will inflict suitable punishment: if we improve it, every LORD'S DAY will be a sweet anticipation of that eternal day, which we hope to spend with Jesus, in the kingdom of his glory. *Amen.*

THE LITTLE
FLOCK of CHRIST ENCOURAGED.

.....
SERMON XXV.
.....

LUKE. xii. 32.

*Fear not little flock; for it is your fathers
good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

ANXIOUS thoughts, about futurity, may perplex and distress the mind; but they cannot promote any valuable purpose. The best way for man to take, with regard to futurity, is, to put his trust in God, and to be diligent in the discharge of those duties which are necessary at the present time. God, in his providence, feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the grass of the field; and he will, most assu-

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redly, feed and clothe his humble and dependent children. He is their father—Jesus is their shepherd—and a kingdom is prepared for them.

The words of our text contain four parts: Jesus has a flock—the followers of Jesus are a little flock—they are not to be afraid—for it is the good pleasure of their father to give them a kingdom.

I. JESUS HAS A FLOCK.

This implies two things, namely, that Jesus may be compared to a shepherd, and that his followers may be compared to a flock.

The prophet Isaiah foretold the appearance of Jesus in the character of a shepherd: *Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him.—He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* Isa. xl. 10, 11. Accordingly, when our Lord appeared in human nature, he claimed this character, saying, *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.* John x. 14. As a shepherd, Jesus feeds his flock with whole-

some truths, and sweet consolations. *He maketh them to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth them beside the still waters.* Psal. xxiii. 2. Jesus, as a shepherd, safely *protects* his flock. They have many powerful enemies; but he is an all-powerful friend.

Of all the animals in the world, sheep are the most striking emblems of a true christian. Like that animal the christian is harmless, meek, and inoffensive. The malignant and violent dispositions which predominated in him as a natural man, are brought into a state of entire subjection, by a scriptural conversion. Thus, the *lion* becomes a gentle *lamb*; and the haughty, mischievous, and turbulent dispositions of man, taking the gospel mould, become humble, useful, meek, and gentle. A society of such men, may be compared to a flock of sheep, on account of their happy union. They love to dwell together, and to feed in the same pastures. In times of danger they form themselves into a close and compact body; and look up, for protection, to *the great shepherd of the sheep*. Happy would it have been if no grievous wolves had ever mixed with the flocks of Jesus; but, alas, the history of the church affords too many proofs, that selfish, proud, and

persecuting tyrants, have appeared, in *sheep's clothing*, amongst the harmless and inoffensive flocks of Jesus.

II. THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE A LITTLE FLOCK.

One would have supposed, from the purity of Jesus' conduct—the wisdom displayed in his discourses—and the many mighty works which he wrought, that the whole Jewish nation would have received him as their shepherd. This, however, was so far from being the case, that he had only a few obscure individuals in his flock. The great bulk of that nation, extremely ignorant and abominably wicked, hated and persecuted him even unto death.

Christianity, after the day of Pentecost, had a rapid spread ; and, in a short time, the greatest part of the Roman Empire professed the faith. But even then, when we consider the great number of formal professors, and the numerous nations which remained in heathenish darkness, we are constrained to say that Jesus had but a little flock.

Afterwards, during the dark ages of Popery, the number diminished ; and but little vital re-

igion can be discovered in the christian church for many hundred years. At the reformation, religion revived. Great numbers embraced the pure religion of Jesus, and professed his name before men. The effects of the reformation have reached our times, and christianity has had many great revivals; but if we view it at its best estate, the number of genuine christians has been very small, when compared with the great mass of mankind.

It does not follow that this will always be the case. There can be no doubt but that Jesus will finally conquer his enemies. Perhaps he has more followers upon earth, at this day, than at any former period. The following prophecy, we hope, will soon be accomplished: *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* Psal. ii. 8.

III. THE FLOCK OF JESUS ARE NOT TO BE AFRAID.

Our Lord, in this passage, does not forbid necessary fear. Fear of evil and danger, is a natural and necessary passion. It leads men to caution and circumspection, and is a safe-guard in times of real danger. Without a filial fear of God, and a fear of sin, we should ruin our-

selves to all eternity. In these respects, *Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.* Prov. xxviii. 14.

The fear against which our Lord cautions his followers, is an unreasonable and slavish fear; which unfits the mind both for duty and enjoyment. Christians should not fear temporal want; for God will supply all their wants out of the riches of his fulness. They should not fear persecution; for God will either support them under it, or deliver them out of it. They should not fear any affliction which may befall them; because God will make all work together for their good. Nor should they fear the powers of darkness, who will not be suffered to tempt more than they are able to bear. In short, out of every trial and temptation a way will be made for their escape.

IV. IT IS THE GOOD PLEASURE OF THEIR FATHER TO GIVE THEM A KINGDOM.

This, in the first instance, may refer to the Apostles. Jesus was about to set up a spiritual kingdom upon earth; and, it was the good pleasure of the father, that they should both be instruments in setting it up and honourable ministers in it after it was set up.

But, no doubt, the kingdom of glory is principally intended. The kingdom of grace refers to that of glory. Indeed, every thing in christianity refers to glory as its ultimate end. Every follower of Jesus has the promise of a kingdom. With that prospect, who can yield to doubts and fears? Will not He, whose good pleasure it is to give the kingdom, provide every needful blessing on the way? *He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.* Rom. viii. 32. What God gives, is given with *good pleasure.* He takes delight in making us happy; and our happiness and his glory are inseparably connected.

Therefore, commit yourselves, ye flocks of Jesus, to his pastoral care. You will soon be conducted to his heavenly fold. There all his sheep will be gathered together, and will be placed out of the reach of danger. They will be richly supplied with every good thing, and will spend a blessed eternity with their heavenly shepherd. *Amen.*

ENCOURAGEMENT to the TEMPTED.

.....

SERMON XXVI.

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JAMES. i. 12.

*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ;
for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown
of life, which the Lord hath promised to them
that love him.*

IF there were no future world, we could not blame men for seeking every kind of pleasure in this that their hearts might desire. They might use all the means in their power to avoid affliction, and say as the ancient *Epicureans* did, *Let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die.* 1 Cor. xv. 32. But that there is a future world, where the good will be rewarded and the bad punished ; and that we are placed here

in a state of trial for that world, is a truth which cannot be denied by those who believe in the *holy scriptures*. On this ground we should cheerfully *endure* the temptations and afflictions which God, the all-wise governor of the world, either permits or appoints ; knowing they will purify us as gold is purified in the furnace ; and prepare us for the *crown of life*, which the *Lord hath promised them that love him*.

Let us consider, first, the temptations which a good man may have to endure : secondly, how he should endure them : and, thirdly, the promised reward.

I. THE TEMPTATIONS WHICH A GOOD MAN MAY HAVE TO ENDURE.

The word *temptation* signifies either an *affliction* which may be laid upon us as a *trial* of our sincerity, or an *enticement* to evil. In the first sense, God may tempt a good man as he did Abraham ; in the second, a man may be tempted by the world, the flesh, and the devil. We read expressly that *God did tempt Abraham*. Gen. xxii. 1. He could not possibly tempt him to evil ; for *God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*. James

i. 13. The temptation or trial of Abraham was, the command which God gave him to offer up Isaac his son, whom he loved: a trial which of all others must have been the most distressing; but he obeyed, and gave a proof to after ages of his sincerity in professing to be a servant of the most high God.

The present state of man is properly called a state of trial; and God, by various methods, often sees it necessary to tempt or try good men. Sometimes he tries them with poverty and pain, and suffers them to be *filled with contempt*. Lazarus, a man of deep piety, was poor, afflicted with pain, and held in contempt by the rich man. At other times he tries them by persecution. Wicked men are suffered to come upon them as a flood; and to threaten them with destruction. To this the apostle James refers in the beginning of this chapter, and in our text. Many of the first christians suffered the spoiling of their goods; were driven from their habitations and friends; were exposed to hunger, cold, and nakedness; were confined in prisons; beaten with stripes; and some of them were put to cruel deaths. They proved by painful experience the truth of Christ's words to his disciples, *If ye were of the world,*

the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you. John xv. 19. We should be thankful that the wrath of man is now restrained ; nevertheless, it is possible, that the time may speedily come, when we may again be tried in this way. Strange events have taken place in Europe within the last twenty years ! May God mercifully prepare us for every future event of his providence, and may we prove that promise true, *He shall deliver thee in six troubles : yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee.* Job v. 19.

Good men may be tempted or enticed to evil by *the world.* Its riches, honours, and pleasures, like the forbidden fruit of paradise, appear *Pleasant to the eye, and to be desired.* Gen. iii. 6. They promise much pleasure ; but afford very little. Solomon, who knew as much of them as any man ever did, said, *Vanity of vanities ; all is vanity.* Eccles. xii. 8. The smiles of men are calculated to put good men off their guard, and to draw them from God and their duty ; and their frowns may produce that degree of fear which leads to sinful compliances. Riches are a snare to all who possess them, hence it is said, *They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many*

foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. Tim. vi. 9. Poverty too is accompanied with danger. The poor man may be tempted to envy his rich neighbour; and, feeling great difficulties to struggle with, may murmur and complain. His poverty may tempt him to dishonesty, and his affliction, to hard thoughts of God and providence. Who then would not pray with Agur? *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.* Prov. xxx. 8, 9. Perhaps the middle ranks of society are the least exposed; but they have enough to do to keep *a conscience void of offence toward God and man:* Acts xxiv. 16.

The word *flesh* sometimes refers to the body, with its appetites, and at other times to the depraved dispositions of the mind. Through the medium of the body, good men may be tempted to indolence, gluttony, drunkenness, and lust. Their senses may lead them astray, for, *The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.* Eccles. i. 8. The corruptions of the mind which remain in some degree, even after conversion, have their correspondent ob-

jects in the world, to which they urge; and temptation in this respect consists chiefly in the restless desire which is felt to enjoy them. *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.* James i. 14, 15. Hence a believer has many inward struggles, which are only known to himself and God; and these will continue till sin is wholly destroyed. It was to believers that the apostle Peter gave the following earnest exhortation, *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.* 1 Pet. ii. 11. Those, therefore, who maintain that there is no such warfare, after a man is born from above, do not judge according to truth.

The devil tempts to evil from the time a man turns to God, to the time when he is called to his reward, in a better world. I have been short upon the former particulars, that I might enlarge upon this; but, to keep up the design of this work, we shall refer our remarks upon Satanic temptations to the next discourse. In the mean time, let us carefully guard against our passions, follies, and frailties. “Happy

(says Jortin) is he, who is engaged in controversy with his own passions, and comes off superior; who makes it his endeavour that his follies and weaknesses may die before him, and who daily meditates on mortality and immortality."

ENCOURAGEMENT to the TEMPTED.

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SERMON XXVII.

.....

JAMES. i. 12.

*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ;
for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown
of life, which the Lord hath promised to them
that love him.*

IN a former discourse upon this subject we considered, briefly, the temptations of the *world* and the *flesh*; in this we shall consider more largely the temptations of the *devil*.

That there is such an invisible wicked spirit, who has access to the minds of men, and who is continually seeking their ruin, appears clearly, both from scripture and experience. He is

called, *The Tempter*, and is represented as using devices to gain advantage of us. In the days of Job, he confessed, when interrogated by the Almighty, that he went to and fro in the earth, and walked up and down in it. The apostle Peter points out his business in walking about our world: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* 1 Pet. v. 8. It is no serious objection that we cannot explain how he works upon the human mind, there being many facts, even in the visible world, which cannot be explained. Some, perhaps, have ascribed too much to his agency. The blame of all their abominations has been laid upon him; when it has been evident that the guilt of the whole rested upon themselves. He can tempt men without their consent; but without their consent he cannot overcome. Punishment, therefore, is properly inflicted upon sinners, though he might entice them to sin. It was no excuse for Eve that the serpent beguiled her to eat. —Let us now consider some temptations, of this infernal spirit, as they are suited to the different states of a religious life.

The first thing in a religious life, is the illu-

mination of the understanding, by which a sinner discovers his fall from God, and his multiplied transgressions of that law which is *holy, just, and good.* Rom. vii. 12. This discovery produces a *godly sorrow.* The awakened sinner weeps and mourns, and like the jailor at Philippi, trembles in the presence of a just God. But the tempter suggests that he is mistaken with himself; that his sins have been few and of a trifling nature; that his state, upon the whole, is very good; and that if he perish, few indeed can be saved. Those who yield to this temptation lose their convictions, and become self-righteous. They say, *We are rich, and have need of nothing, though in reality they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Rev. iii. 17. If the mourning penitent overcome this temptation, his sorrow for sin increases; his soul is humbled in the dust; and he is prepared for the mercy of an offended God.

The subtle enemy finding it impossible to lead the penitent to presumption, endeavours now to drive him to despair. Hence the next temptation insinuates, that his sins are too many to be forgiven; that he has sinned against the Holy Ghost; that his nature is as black as

hell, and cannot be renewed ; and that nothing remains for him but *a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* Heb. x. 27. It is the duty of ministers to comfort him under these dreadful apprehensions. They direct him to Jesus, and repeat the promises which are made to such as *labour and are heavy-laden.* Matt. xi. 28. Encouraged by these, hope springs up in his breast ; he sees the sufficiency of Christ to save ; he ventures upon him ; and is reconciled to God through the blood of the cross.

There is another temptation which is often presented when a man first feels the awakening influences of the blessed Spirit of God ; namely, that religion will make him melancholy ; that it is only fit for the aged, the sick, and the dying ; and that it will be more prudent to put it off to old age, than to live like a criminal, in perpetual dread of execution. This temptation too often succeeds. But that it may be resisted and overcome, the penitent must be informed that his present sorrow will give place to pure joy ; that when he is reconciled to God, his soul will be filled with sweet consolation ; that religion is the happiness and honour of man in all conditions ; and that he who for the sake

of present and sinful indulgences, puts it off to old age, may not then find the door of mercy open.

We shall now consider the attacks of Satan upon a child of God.—When this high privilege is obtained, by faith in Christ Jesus, the child of God is so filled with peace and joy, and his confidence in the Redeemer so strong, that he thinks himself out of the reach of temptation, especially from the wicked one ; but he finds himself mistaken. He is soon tempted to doubt the reality of his faith ; to think it is nothing but mere imagination ; and that he has deceived himself with a supposition that God was reconciled. This temptation, though exceedingly painful, puts him upon an useful enquiry into the nature of faith, and the grounds of acceptance with God ; and he finds his faith accompanied with love to God, and followed by obedience. The consequence of which is, such an establishment upon the Rock of Ages, that the enemy seldom ventures to attack him again on this ground. Some, indeed, have so far yielded in the dark hour, as to lose their confidence altogether, and it has not been without great difficulty that they have been restored to the favour and the peace of God.

When this temptation is over, another, of a very dangerous tendency, is frequently introduced to the mind ; namely, to trust in what has already been experienced, and to neglect the means of future improvement. The believer is required to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ* ; but the devil tempts him to think that there is no need of such a growth ; that being now a child of God, he may indulge himself in some little things, in which there is not much harm ; and that his former scruples, when he durst not even think of these things, arose from ignorance and superstition. If he give way, his heart is soon hardened ; he sinks into a state of dull formality ; he loses all the comforts of religion ; and is in great danger of losing his soul. Many have fallen into this snare, and all have great need of that caution, *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* 1 Cor. x. 12.

If the child of God still pursue his way, Satan will probably tempt him to *pride*, on account of some supposed superiority to others, either in gifts or graces. It is no matter whether he be superior or not ; for, if he can be induced to think so, his soul is endangered. Pride having gained some ascendancy, he wishes to fill the highest place, and to be honoured by pecu-

liar marks of respect. But meeting with many vexatious disappointments, he becomes sour and peevish, and disturbs the peace of the church. Under this temptation it is necessary to recollect, that we have nothing either great or good but what God has bestowed ; and that we are still as much dependant upon him as we were the first hour we sought *his face*,

Again : There are seasons wherein the tempter endeavours to fill the mind of a good man with doubts respecting the being of God, the certainty of providence, the truth of the bible, the reality of christian experience, and the sincerity of professors. This temptation seldom lasts long ; but it is very painful. It often comes suddenly, and when least looked for. Some have felt it in a moment, while engaged in the most solemn and important duties ; while filled with abundant peace, and raised up with sacred joy almost to the *third heaven*. The best method that can be taken in these gloomy moments, is, to imitate the Israelites in the wilderness, who *cried unto the Lord in trouble* ; and he delivered them out of distresses. Psal. cvii. 6.

Sometimes this foul spirit represents death

to a good man in its most terrific forms ; frightens him with the pain that he may feel in that awful hour ; and suggests, that then perhaps, his God and Father may forsake him. But he hides from his view, as much as possible, the delightful prospect of a blessed immortality ; and the gracious promises of God to support his children in that trying scene. Exposed as we are to this temptation, it is pleasing to reflect, that Jesus delivers *them who through fear of death are all their life-time subject to bondage.* Heb. ii. 15.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the temptations which God's children have to endure from this implacable foe. I shall only mention one more : He often tempts them to fear that they shall not be able to endure to the end ; reminds them of the great difficulties of the christian life ; of the vast number who have fallen ; and of the probability that they may give way in some evil hour, and so be cast away at last. Under this temptation they sometimes think it of no use to contend any longer ; that they might as well give up the christian warfare now as at some future period ; and that one grand struggle in the last moments of life may do as well as a continued warfare. But they

should remember, that if they leave all till death, they, in fact, give up the contest, and that their enemy will triumph. To conquer *then*, they must conquer *now*. And that they may conquer, let them consider themselves as being under the constant care of Jesus, who, himself having *suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted.* Heb. ii. 18.

How we are to endure temptation, and what reward we may expect in a future world, shall be considered in the next discourse.

ENCOURAGEMENT to the TEMPTED.

SERMON XXVIII.

JAMES i. 12.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

IN the two former discourses, we considered the temptations which a good man may have to endure: in this we shall consider how he should endure them; and the promised reward.

II. HOW SHOULD A GOOD MAN ENDURE TEMPTATION?

The word *endure* conveys the idea of something which is painful; and all our temptations

of every description, are painful. We should, however, endure them with patience, cheerfulness, firmness, and perseverance.

Under all your temptations, *Let patience have her perfect work.* James i. 4. We *have need of patience, that after we have done the will of God, we might receive the promise.* Heb. x. 36. Patience implies calmness, and quietness, and is opposed to violence, murmuring, fretfulness, and complaining. The brightest examples recorded in the word of God, have exercised this grace in the trying hour. Job, in this respect is a pattern to all ages. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord.* James v. 11. Jesus bore, with perfect patience, both the temptations of the devil, and the insults of men. That we may be encouraged, let us behold him in the last hours of his humiliation, when *he was oppressed and afflicted, yet opened not his mouth—who when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* 1 Pet. ii. 23. The saints who are now in glory, exercised patience in the tribulations and temptations which they endured when on earth ; and we are expressly commanded to follow them

in this respect. Patience proves a present blessing, as it blunts the *keen edge* of affliction ; but impatience, by giving a keener edge to our sufferings, proves a curse. We see this remark verified in many instances ; and we have often experienced it ourselves. Worldly-minded men, patiently endure hardships, when they have a prospect of temporal advantage ; and shall the pious be impatient, with the pleasing prospect of *a crown of life* ? Besides, this grace shines with peculiar brightness in a suffering saint. We see the excellency of religion realized in his conduct. His countenance discovers the calmness of his mind, and his words convey lessons of wisdom. *Thou Lord, says he, sufferest me to be in the furnace of affliction ; but I dare not complain. Thy hand is upon me ; but I am silent. Thou lettest loose my enemies ; but wilt not leave me in their hands.* O blessed disposition ! O happy temper ! Let us pray that God may endue us all with this heavenly grace, that we may be able to say after every trial, *I waited patiently for the Lord ; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* Psal. xl. 1.

It is necessary not only to be patient, but *cheerful*, in all our trials and temptations. We are directed to *count it all joy when we fall into*

divers temptations. James i. 2. It may, indeed, seem strange to some that a precept so contrary to the feelings of mankind, should be given to the afflicted. Joy, it may be argued, implies either the possession or the prospect of some good, and cheerfulness is quite in character, or a fit thing, when prosperity crowns our days. This we allow, but it proves nothing. We maintain, yea and will maintain, that all the temptations of a holy man, when rightly *endured*, prove real blessings in the end ; that even while he *endures* the pain which necessarily attends them, he has a large portion of blessedness in his possession ; and that his future prospects of blessedness far exceed those of the highest worldly prosperity. God, whose grace is sufficient, favours him with his special presence, and all works for his good. He can, therefore, *Rejoice evermore ; pray without ceasing : in every thing give thanks : for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning him.* 1 Thess. v. 16—18. Cheerfulness in trials gives strength to the soul, and enables a good man to endure with manliness. Wicked men often sink under the pressures of life. They have not that support which is necessary to bear them up. All to them is darkness and gloominess ; *but light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for*

the upright in heart. Psal. xc. vii. 11. By faith they see through the dark clouds which hang over them, and by love they mount up to their native heaven. Paul and Silas, under the joyful influences of religion, sung praises to God in prison, though sore with stripes, loaded with chains, and surrounded with the darkness of midnight. The holy apostles were *troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair: persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.* 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

Cheerfulness will produce *firmness* in trials and temptations. If any thing in the world should inspire men with firmness, it is religion; for nothing else is of equal importance. A man may lose all he has in this world, and be happy without it; but if he lose religion, all is lost. Recollect in temptation, that all is at stake. On the one hand, you have the joys of religion here, and its rewards hereafter; and on the other, the miseries of sin here, and its punishment hereafter. Therefore call forth all your powers; employ them to the best advantage and be as firm as a rock. Consider the firmness of suffering saints in former ages. *They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered*

*about in sheep-skins and goat skins ; being desti-
tute, afflicted, tormented ; of whom the world was
not worthy : they wandered in deserts, and in
mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.* Heb. xi. 37, 38. But they were not moved from
their steadfastness.—We observed above, that
wicked men often sink under the pressures of
life ; but this is not always the case. In their
favourite pursuits, they frequently bid defiance
to danger, and disregard pain. See the hardy
soldier in a dangerous campaign ; view him in
the field of battle, surrounded with the dead,
and awfully exposed every moment to the
shafts of death ! See how firmly he proceeds ;
no fear or trembling ; no wish to retire from
danger ; only one sentiment inspires his breast,
namely, *conquest or death*. See him, I say, and
stand fast in the Lord thy God. Resolutely
go on thy way in the strength of grace. Thus
thou wilt become terrible to thy enemies ; they
will fall at thy feet, or flee from thy presence,

But all this will not do without *perseverance*. Many have fought bravely for a time, but have shamefully yielded at last. In this case, former victories turn up to no good account. *Ye shall be hated*, says Christ, *of all men for my name's sake ; but he that endureth to the end shall*

be saved. Matt. x. 22. The *end*, in this passage, refers to death, which ends our probationary state. A good man may imagine that the trial under which he now labours will be his last, and that he shall enjoy uninterrupted rest in the present world; but he will find himself mistaken: for trial will succeed trial, as wave succeeds wave on the stormy ocean; nor will he enjoy a constant calm till he reaches the desired haven, and lands on Canaan's happy shore. This leads us to consider,

III. THE PROMISED REWARD.

The man who *endures* temptation is abundantly blessed in the present world; but shall be much more so in that which is to come. When he is fully *proved*, he shall receive the *crown of life*. The crown of life denotes complete victory, and permanent glory. Earthly crowns, however bright, must fade, and those who wear them must die; but the crown of life fadeth not away, and he who wears it is immortal. This crown denotes not only victory and glory, but also all that blessedness which will crown existence in a future state. There every conquering saint shall be blessed with the glorious presence of God and the Lamb; the society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect;

and such employments as shall be calculated to afford the most exquisite and refined pleasures. We are at a loss, indeed, either to express, or even to conceive the glories and blessedness of that world, but we may be certain that they imply a freedom from all evil ; an enjoyment of all good ; and endless duration. *The inhabitants are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple : and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to fountains of living water : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* Rev. vii. 15—17. The rest we may leave to God, who will make known all we can desire to know, when he has found us *faithful unto death*. We shall then fully prove, that the glory of crowns, the splendour of courts, and all the unsanctified pleasures of the rich and great, are not worthy to be sought by the candidates of heaven.

The good man will receive the crown of life immediately after death ; for then he is fully proved, and his probationary state comes to an end. Lazarus died, and was immediately con-

ducted to Abraham's bosom. The penitent thief, on the cross, was admitted into paradise on the very day he died. And the apostle Paul expected when absent from the body, to be present with the Lord. But it will not be till the resurrection of the dead, that God will give all the glory and happiness which he has prepared for his saints: it is not, therefore, an improbable opinion, that those who are now in glory, are looking forward, with pleasing hope, for the full accomplishment of those promises which relate to that glorious event. Then death shall be *swallowed up in victory*, and Christ will triumph over all his enemies.

The crown is promised to all who love God. Love to God produces obedience, and obedience will be rewarded. Love to God is a most powerful principle in the heart of a believer. Its influence extends to every thought, word, and work. If love *wax cold*, all the other graces wither and die; but if it continue to burn, they grow and flourish.

God has *promised* a crown of life, and his promise cannot fail. Heaven and earth must pass away, but his word cannot pass away. Saints may depend upon his word, without

either doubt or fear. He has promised, and he will bring it to pass. Commit your souls to him in well doing. Carefully imitate Moses, who *chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for he had respect unto the recompence of reward.* Heb. xi. 25.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and evermore. Amen. Jude 24, 25.

A CAUTION AGAINST IDOLATRY.

SERMON XXIX.

1 JOHN v. 21.

Little children keep yourselves from Idols.

IDOLATRY is a sin which cannot pass unpunished. It has been the reproach of human nature, and the ruin of all who have lived and died under its influence. In nations professing pure christianity, there is no danger of that *gross* idolatry which has been practised by the heathen nations ; but there is great danger of a more *refined*, but not less sinful, idolatry. In the sight of God a man may be an idolater who never bowed down to an idol. Let us, then, seriously regard the advice of the venerable apostle

John, to his young converts: *Little children keep yourselves from idols.*

Let us, first, make a few general remarks upon Idolatry; and, secondly, urge the caution contained in our text.

I. GENERAL REMARKS UPON IDOLATRY.

Gross idolatry is that superstitious worship which men pay to idols or false gods. There is a living and true God who made, preserves, and blesses man, and whom he is bound to worship in spirit and in truth; but having forgotten, and departed from the living and true God, foolish man has turned his attention to idols, and has paid those honours to them which are only due to his maker, preserver, and benefactor. When this gross idolatry first began to be practised, cannot be determined; but it appears to have been ancient, having spread far and wide when God called Abraham to leave his native country. What gave rise to it is uncertain. Heroes, perhaps, and men who had been signally useful in their life-time, might, after death, become the first objects of idolatrous worship. A supposition that the spirits of those departed heroes and benefactors of mankind resided in the bright luminaries of heaven,

might be the first step towards the worship of the heavenly bodies. The heavens not being always visible, might suggest the propriety of making such images for worship as would best represent those absent luminaries: this idea might give rise to gods of gold and silver, of wood and stone. In process of time it was conjectured that almost every thing in nature had its peculiar god, and that man should pay homage to all the gods. Hence sprung up innumerable gods: mountains and valleys; woods and plains; fountains, rivers, and seas; virtues and vices; peace and war; the particular periods of time; the different ages and circumstances of life; and the various implements of agriculture, all had their tutelary deities. In fact, as a celebrated writer observes, the whole universe seemed to swarm with these airy nothings. Thus the true God was forgotten, and his glory given either to mere creatures, or to objects of mere imagination.

Gross idolatry has spread over the nations. We have many vestiges of it in our own land. The names of our days, and of some of our months, were given by idolaters. Sunday was dedicated to the sun; Monday to the moon; Tuesday to Tuesca; Wednesday to Woden; Thursday to Thor; Friday to Freya; and Saturday to Saturn.

We may also rank with *gross* idolatry, the Romish worship of angels, saints, images, and reliques ; for it is as abominable in every respect as pagan idolatry. That corrupt church has long copied the ignorant and bewildered heathens ; and, perhaps, if the protestants had not stood forth, the champions of truth, all Europe would at this day have been as much devoted to *gross* idolatry as heathen Rome.

Refined idolatry, is the substitution of any thing, in our affections, in the place of God. Now we come a little nearer home ; and perhaps, may find idolaters amongst professing christians. A *covetous* man is called an idolater, because riches are supreme in his affections. *Gluttons* and *drunkards* may be called idolaters, because they serve their bellies more than God. The first and greatest command is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart* ; and, therefore, to love the creature more than him is idolatry. Complete happiness should be sought in God ; but if we seek it in the creature we are idolaters. Man who is weak and feeble, wants help and support from God ; but when he depends upon, and trusts in any other being, he makes that being his idol. God requires our highest praise ; but, alas, how often do we

praise ourselves and other men with idolatrous praises ! We may idolize a husband, a wife, a child, a friend ; we may idolize our houses, our lands, our gold and silver ; or we may idolize our ourselves. Whatever stands in the place of God is an idol ; whatever we love most is our god. The world abounds with the rich bounties of an indulgent providence, and all these good things may be loved, used, and enjoyed in moderation ; but the heart must be given to God : *My son, give me thy heart.* Prov. xxiii. 26. Recollect, then, if you give your hearts to others, you are idolaters. Reproach not the ignorant heathens for their superstitious worship ; but examine your own hearts and your own ways. Men are never without a god ; for if they have not the true God, they always have false gods. Let us carefully examine this remark ; it may open our eyes to see many of those sins and follies which have been hidden from our view. Perhaps we shall see that instead of the one true God, we have had many false gods ; and that the true God, whom we have forgotten, might justly cast us out of his presence for ever and ever.

II. URGE THE CAUTION CONTAINED IN OUR TEXT.

Many reasons may be assigned why christians, above all others, should keep themselves from idols. They have superior light ; they have seen and felt the folly of idolatry ; they have tasted the pleasures of a pure spiritual worship ; they have superior privileges ; and they have better hopes than other men. If they fall into idolatry, even the most refined, they give up the light which has shone upon their understandings, the grace which has influenced their hearts, and all their hopes of future blessedness. O beware ! Let not the world seduce you by its bewitching charms : let not Satan deceive you by his subtle wiles : let not your own hearts betray you. God is now *supreme* in your affections, and resolve that he shall be so to all eternity.

That you may be kept from idolatry meditate frequently upon the greatness, the glory, and all sufficiency of the true God. You will then see more clearly, the propriety of his claims to your highest regards. The better you know him, the more you will desire to enjoy him as your God. He possesses all you can want, either in this world or in the next ; and you will *prove* him to be a full, satisfying, and everlasting portion.

Often reflect upon the folly of idolatry. What are those idols which men worship? How insufficient to supply their wants, to protect them in danger, or to direct their steps through this dark world! What can the world do for men? What can these worthless gods do for immortal spirits? Riches are uncertain, carnal pleasures soon cloy, and a sting is left behind which torments the guilty soul.

Think seriously of the difficulties which men plunge themselves into, by departing from the living God. How can they expect the blessings of heaven, while they deny the God of heaven, and withhold from him that worship and service which he requires? Which of their idols can rescue them, when he appears in judgment? *Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* Psal. l. 22.

Keep far from idolaters. Never deem that man your friend who is an enemy to your God. Bad example is powerful; but let it be your constant care to keep as far from danger as possible. When duty *compels* you to mix with men, who are without God, you may humbly claim the watchful and protecting care of God; but there is not a possibility of escaping the

fatal snares of worldly company, if you voluntarily run into it.

Watch over your own hearts. Our hearts are prone to wander from God; but let us notice the first motions of evil, and instantly nip our sins in the bud. There can be no evil in our lives, if we indulge no evil in our hearts. If our hearts go out after the world, we cannot possibly avoid Idolatry. The advice of our Lord, upon this subject, will be an infallible preservative against this dreadful evil: *Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.* Matt. vi. 20, 21.

To conclude: Let us cultivate religious tempers; let us be much engaged in prayer; and let us love, honour, and obey God. *O Israel return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*

Hos. xiv. 1—3.

M M

THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.

SERMON XXX.

ECCLES. xii. 8.

Vanity of Vanities, saith the preacher: all is vanity.

SOLOMON had very considerable experience both of men and things. The exalted situation in which he was placed by divine providence, afforded him more extensive opportunities of knowledge than that of any individual in private life. Besides, he was a man of deep penetration, and uncommon diligence in searching after truth. The result of his diligent enquiries and long experience, was, that view of

things which is expressed in our text: *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher: all is vanity.*

Here are two thiugs: first, the preacher; and secondly, his sermon.

I. THE PREACHER.

A preacher, whose business it is to convey instruction, should be furnished with considerable stores of *wisdom*. In this respect Solomon was well qualified for the important work. His *wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt—He was wiser than all men—And his fame was in all nations round about.* 1 Kings iv. 30, 31.

Those Preachers who *experience* the important truths which they teach, are the most likely to make deep impressions upon the hearts of their hearers. In this respect also, Solomon was well qualified to teach his people. This book contains a great deal of his own experience, as he had passed through the varying scenes of life. It was therefore with strict propriety that he observed of himself, *My heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.* Eccles. i. 16. He had proved many things;

and found little else than disappointment and vexation of spirit.

God has frequently raised up men from the lowest orders of society to preach his word ; but So'omon was a *royal* preacher. He begins this sermon by informing us, that these are *the words of the preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem.* Chap. i. 1. Though seated upon the throne of a great nation, he did not think it beneath him to preach. Happy is that nation which hath such a monarch !

It is indispensably necessary for every preacher to be *faithful* in the discharge of his duty. Few preachers have been more so than Solomon. His sermon does not flatter the pride of man. It gives no encouragement to mere men of the world ; but it is full of the most mortifying truths, and of the most awful warnings, against those things which are most pleasing to corrupt and depraved nature.

II. THE SERMON.

The sermon proves that all things in this world, are vanity to an unsanctified mind. The word which is rendered *vanity*, implies either something which is empty in itself, as vapour

and smoke ; or something which proves empty to us, on account of its insufficiency to make us happy. The following remarks, I hope, will throw considerable light upon this subject.

No work of God is vain. All his works, whether of creation, providence, redemption, or grace, are great and good. *All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord : and thy saints shall bless thee.* Psal. cxlv. 10. God never made one creature in vain. All creatures, from the arch-angel in heaven, to the meanest reptile on earth --from the tall cedar of Lebanon, to the most insignificant weed, have their proper uses and ends. There is nothing superfluous --nothing wanting in the creation ; but all things have been made by exact weight and measure.

Some works of men are not vain. Many of our works are not only useful, but absolutely necessary ; and they are never vain when they imitate the works of God. To be useful in life, we must plant and build, reap and sow, buy and sell : we must instruct the ignorant, visit the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the distressed. But who dare say these works are vain ? We engage in them

with delight ; and we reflect upon them with inward satisfaction.

Many things in themselves are absolutely vain. Amongst these we may reckon *desires* which cannot be gratified : *imaginings* which cannot be realized : *affections* which have no suitable objects : *curiosity* in things which are not useful : *titles* which only feed our pride : *riches* in such abundance, that we know not how to dispose of them ; *company* which corrupts our morals : *dress* which has no other object than that of attracting admiration : and *fashions*, which, being devised to gratify vanity, vary as the wind. These may appear substantial blessings at a distance; but, like vapour and smoke, they contain nothing but emptiness, and produce nothing but vexatious disappointment.

Every thing, however good in itself, is vanity to a mind unchanged by the influences of the Holy Spirit. The mind of man is so formed, that nothing can satisfy its large desires but God. He must be supreme ; and every created object must be subordinate in the affections, before solid happiness can be attained. Till this is the case, the mind is empty, and all enjoyments are vain.

Happiness is the grand object of all our pursuits, from infancy to old age. We never lose sight of it for a moment. Are we covetous of riches? It is because we imagine they will make us happy. Do we aim at honour? It is that we may possess happiness. Are we seeking sensual pleasures? It is for the sake of the fancied happiness which they will afford. But our pursuits of happiness are foolish and vain. We turn this way and that way; but cannot find the desired object. One thing says, 'It is not in me.' And another, 'It is not in me.' But we still go on, and find vanity written upon every thing we obtain. Then, we blame the works of God, and the constitution of human nature; though we understand neither the one nor the other. Wearying ourselves with vain pursuits, we sink into a discontented and murmuring temper, not reflecting that the cause of all our disappointments is our own folly.

When we turn to God, by repentance and faith, a new scene presents itself to our view. The world appears beautiful, and all the creatures good. Every thing stands in its proper place, and yields that *kind* and *degree* of pleasure which was designed in its original formation. The soul being renewed by grace, is

easy and happy, and sweetly enjoys God in all his works and ways. Painful worldly anxieties are banished ; and tormenting grief, for the loss of creature good, is felt no longer. In this state every temporal enjoyment is viewed as the rich bounty of an indulgent God, and care is taken to improve these bounties to the best of purposes. The creatures lead to the Creator, who is seen, felt, and enjoyed, at all times, and in all things ; and he fills the soul with pure and lasting pleasure. When this is our experience we can say with David, *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.* Psal. xxiii. 5. 6.

Thus, pure religion brings man back, in some degree, to his primitive state ; and he again tastes the joys of paradise. Not that he rises so high either in enjoyment or glory as man did when he was first formed ; but he is in a measure like him, and is rising to a higher state. Heaven will soon be open to him, and the redeemed of the Lord, in Zion, will receive him as a friend and a brother.

Let us, then, complain no more of the world in which we live ; but bless God for all his glorious works. Let all our works resemble those of God, and then we shall never work in vain. Let us attentively study our own character and state as men, that we may not be deceived with ourselves. Let us examine all our weaknesses, sins, and follies ; and we shall soon see a need of that salvation which is offered to us through Christ Jesus. Confiding in his merit, he will lead us to the enjoyment of all we can reasonably desire, both in this world and the next ; he will lead us to the fountain of happiness, and while we drink the living streams, God will be our father, friend, and portion.

Neglecting this plan, all will still be vanity and vexation of spirit ; and we shall go on from one degree of vanity to another, till it will be too late to rectify our mistakes. Let us now consider these things, and lay them to heart. Let us open our eyes, and turn away from vanities and lies. Let us seek God earnestly, nor rest till we find him ; and may we enjoy him as our chief good for ever ! *Amen.*

THE
GROWTH of a CHRISTIAN.

.....
SERMON XXXI.
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2 PET. iii. 18.

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our
Lord Jesus Christ. —*

THE christian life is perpetually exposed to danger, and cannot be preserved without constant watchfulness and prayer. In the verse preceding our text, the apostle Peter gives a solemn caution to the christians of that day : *Beware lest ye being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.* As much as if he had said, Beware of those

dangers which encompass you on every side ; and proceed in your christian course with the utmost caution : and that you may not fall from your steadfastness, use all those means which will enable you to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Here are two things : first, we must grow in grace ; and, secondly, we must grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. WE MUST GROW IN GRACE.

The divine life, like that of plants and animals, is small in its beginning. Our Saviour compares it to a grain of mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds ; but which, by a regular growth, becomes a great tree. Thus our graces, though small at first, may grow till they become very great.

The word *grace* generally signifies *favour, kindness, and good-will* ; and the grace of God signifies that *merciful-kindness* which appears in the redemption and salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ. But, in our text, the word grace is applied to holy tempers and dispositions, which are the effects of God's mercy and love ; for, such is our state by nature, that we never

could have acquired holy tempers without the grace of God.

When a man is born of God, every grace is planted in him, though in a small degree, which he ever will possess ; just as a plant or animal, however small, possesses every property of vegetable or animal nature. We are not, therefore, to grow by the addition of new graces ; but by an improvement of those which we now enjoy.

The principal graces in which we must grow, are faith, hope, love ; patience, meekness, gentleness ; justice, mercy, truth ; firmness, courage, and stability. While these heavenly graces increase and abound in our hearts, we shall abound in every good word and work ; and we shall grow daily in the divine favour and acceptance.

Our growth in grace should be universal, regular, and constant. All the graces must grow at the same time ; for one cannot grow alone. *Lord Bacon* says, “ We must not proceed in forming the moral character as a statuary proceeds in forming a statue, who works sometimes on the face, sometimes on one part, and sometimes on another ; but we must pro-

ceed, and it is in our power to proceed, as nature does in forming a flower, or any other of her productions. She throws out altogether and at once the whole system of every being, and the rudiments of all her parts."

Growth in grace may be almost imperceptible, but it must go on every moment. The religion of too many is like the *gourd* of Jonah, which came up in a night, and perished in a night ; but that which is pleasing to God and profitable to man, may be compared to the *stable oak*, which grows constantly in all its parts, though in a way which cannot be perceived by the most exact observation.

That we may grow, let us keep every grace in full and *constant* exercise. There are but few days in which peculiar circumstances and situations do not require the exercise of every grace ; and by constant exercise they strengthen and flourish. The *means of grace* must be constantly used, if we wish to grow in grace ; for in them we are fed, nourished, and supported. Prayer, reading the holy scriptures, public worship, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper, are means in which we receive those rich supplies of grace, by which our growth is pri-

cipally promoted. No means, however, unless connected with the kindly influences of heaven, can promote our growth. The *Sun of Righteousness* must shine upon our hearts, and the refreshing influences of the divine Spirit must be felt, or all the means, however good, will prove completely useless. At the same time, let us carefully guard against improper company, sensual pleasures, and a love of the world; for these have a deadly influence upon the graces of the Spirit; and if we indulge ourselves in them, we shall soon be *twice dead*, and *plucked up by the roots*. Jude 12. I may further remark, that a constant improvement of affliction, and frequent acts of self-denial, will considerably promote our growth in grace. The more we mortify carnal nature, the more rapidly shall we increase in spiritual graces; but self-indulgence in prosperity, and a murmuring spirit in adversity, soon destroy the life of religion in the soul.

The growth of grace in the heart of a true believer, like the growth of the animal frame, is so regular, that it can neither be felt nor seen, by the most attentive observer, except at distant periods. Hence, to know whether we are growing or not, we must fre-

quently compare our present state with what it was some time ago. There are many useful questions which we may propose to ourselves by way of trial. Does our love of the world abate? Do our religious enjoyments encrease? Are we more circumspect in our conduct? Are our hopes of glory brighter than they were? O let us be serious in these enquiries! They are of vast importance. By growing in grace, we glorify God; and secure happiness; but by declining from religion, we dishonour him, and ruin ourselves.

II. WE MUST GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Knowledge is two-fold, namely, *theoretical* and *experimental*. Both are necessary; and the first lays the foundation of the second. Every christian should know the real character of Jesus, as it relates to his person, offices, and works; his doctrines; his commands and promises; his mercies and judgments; his worship and word. To attain this knowledge, we should read, and diligently study, the holy scriptures of the old testament and the new; we should hear the ministers of Jesus, whose duty it is to instruct us in things pertaining to the kingdom; we should converse with those

christians whose judgments are enlightened ; and, above all, we should pray to the Father of Lights for that wisdom which cometh from above.

But the best knowledge of Christ is that which is experimental. We know him experimentally as a Prophet, when we are taught by him ; we know him experimentally as a Priest, when we enjoy reconciliation through the atonement ; we know him experimentally as a King, when we are governed and protected by him ; and we know him experimentally as a Saviour, when we are saved by him.

To grow in this knowledge, we must daily improve what we know in theory. The moment we see a thing, let us apply it to the best of purposes. Thus by following the light we have, more will be given ; and that twilight which we enjoy in our first setting out in religion, will lead to a glorious day. We see, however, very great errors amongst professing christians upon this important subject. Some are fond of knowledge and disputation, but neglect grace and a holy conduct ; others plead for practice and experience without so much knowledge, like the papists, who say, " Ignorance is the

mother of devotion." The wise unite these: so that while grace influences their hearts and lives, they endeavour to enrich their understandings with valuable treasures of knowledge; justly arguing, that religion should begin with light in the judgment, and that its progress should be marked with encreasing light.

It is very probable that we shall grow in knowledge and holiness in a future world. The soul of man, at some future period, may attain that perfection which the highest angel now enjoys: nevertheless, that angel will keep its distance in the scale of being, having grown progressively with the human soul. The following beautiful passage in the Spectator, (No.cxi.) suggested this idea: "That Cherubim, which now appears as a god to a human soul, knows very well that the period will come about in eternity, when the human soul shall be as perfect as he himself now is: nay when she shall look down upon that degree of perfection, as much as she now falls short of it. It is true the higher nature still advances, and by that means preserves his distance and superiority in the scale of being; but he knows that, how high soever the station is of which he stands possessed at present, the inferior nature will at length mount up to it, and shine forth in the same degree of glory."

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THE
PURE in HEART SHALL SEE GOD.

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SERMON XXXII.

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MATT. v. 8.

Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.

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THE wickedness of men's lives proceeds from the depravity of their hearts ; and, therefore, before the life can be pure, the heart must be cleansed. The heart, in an unconverted state, is *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked* ; but in a converted state, it is renewed in righteousness and holiness after the image of God. Real blessedness necessarily follows this great change. God, who before was hidden and unknown, is now both seen, admired, and

enjoyed. *Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.*

Let us, first, make a few remarks upon purity of heart : and, secondly, consider the blessedness which results from it.

I. REMARKS UPON PURITY OF HEART.

Things are commonly said to be *pure* when they are simple, unmixed, and uncompounded with any other substance ; and purity of heart, in this respect, implies sincerity and simplicity, as opposed to the base mixtures of hypocrisy and deceit. David enquires, *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ? And who shall stand in his holy place ?* The answer is, *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.* Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. That Nathaniel was a man of this character, appears from the testimony of our Lord : *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* John i. 47.

But purity of heart, understood in its full extent, implies, that *entire sanctification*, whereby the heart is cleansed from all evil, and filled with all good : or a heart from which *old things are passed away, and all things are become new,*

2 Cor. v. 17. The understanding is enlightened ; the will is subdued ; and the affections are placed upon proper objects ; sinful thoughts are banished ; pride is rooted out, and the soul is clothed with humility ; furious passions are destroyed, and are succeeded by meekness ; and gentleness ; undue love of the world is rooted up, and the supreme love of God is planted in the mind ; murmuring and complaining are at an end, and contentment is sweetly experienced in every state : and, in short, the carnal mind is exchanged for the mind which was in Christ Jesus. It necessarily follows that God is *all in all* to the pure in heart. They worship him in spirit and in truth ; and constantly obey him with a willing mind. The tyranny of sin is at an end, and the government of God, which in every point of view is desirable, is begun in the soul. The constant language of one who is pure in heart is, *Not my will, but thine be done.* Luke xxii. 42. Such a one may be tempted to evil ; but temptation is not sin. He may feel many weaknesses, frailties, and infirmities ; but these are not sins. He feels nothing within contrary to the divine nature, for every principle in his heart leads him to God and heaven, so that *whether he eat or drink, or whatsoever he doth, it is all to the glory of God.* 1 Cor. x. 31.

Doubts have been entertained, even by the pious, whether such a state of purity can be attained on this side the grave. They forget, however, that if it be not attained before death, it cannot be attained afterwards ; for there is no purgatory after death to purify the polluted soul from its sins. To say it is wrought in death, is to say nothing at all ; unless the phrase, *in death*, signifies some intermediate state between a mortal life, and immortality : a thought which is so absurd as not to deserve a refutation. The plain fact is, that death ends this mortal life ; and the moment we die, we enter upon an unchangeable state in the eternal world. This great work, then, must either precede death, or we never can be admitted into the undefiled kingdom of God. If it precede death an hour, why not a year—why not twenty years—why not *now*? Certainly God is both able and willing to cleanse us now ; and if we are not cleansed, we may blame ourselves. Christ shed his precious blood to cleanse us from all sin ; God expressly commands us to be holy ; He has promised to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ; inspired men have prayed for clean hearts ; and our text pronounces the pure in heart blessed.

That we may attain purity of heart, let us

feel the need of it ; and use those means by which it may be attained. The principal means to be used are prayer and faith. *Prayer* opens heaven. God condescendingly says to the needy sons of men, *Ask, and it shall be given to you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you.* Matt. vii. 7. But how can we expect this great blessing, if we never ask for it? Will God force it upon us? It discovers great goodness in him to shew us the need of purity : surely we shall not think it too much trouble to pray for the blessing. But let us pray earnestly, and persevere in prayer till we receive a gracious answer. *Faith* in *Jesus* is a necessary means of sanctification. Faith purifies the heart ; and we are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus. We trust in Jesus for pardon : let us trust in him for holiness. When we can do so, the Holy Spirit is given in his cleansing influences, and the work is accomplished.

II. THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH RESULTS FROM PURITY OF HEART.

The blessedness of purity far exceeds all that can be said upon the subject : it is better felt than it can be expressed. Of the pure in heart our text says, *they shall see God.* This may imply two things, namely, that they shall have pleas-

ing discoveries of God, and that they shall enjoy him as their God.

The discoveries of God, with which the pure in heart are favoured, refer both to this world and the next. *In this world* they see him in all his wonderful works of creation, in all his varied providences, and in the pleasing dispensations of his grace. Before, they had neither eyes to see, nor hearts to understand; but now his wisdom, power, and goodness, meet their eyes in every direction; and while they see, they love, adore, and praise. In the *next world*, they shall see him face to face. All his glorious perfections will appear in a way unknown to mortals; and the sight will prove an everlasting source of blessedness.

A sight of God is accompanied with an enjoyment of God. To *see* frequently signifies to *enjoy*. A bare discovery of his glorious works and perfections, unaccompanied with an enjoyment of him, would not make us blessed; but the sight and enjoyment being connected, our blessedness is great indeed! In whatever way we view God, we can claim him as our own. His wisdom directs our steps; his power protects us from danger, and helps us to do his

will ; his goodness supplies our wants ; his mercy pardons our sins ; his justice maintains our right ; his purity is communicated to our hearts ; and his glory is put upon us so as to make us glorious.

What we now enjoy of God will be perfected hereafter. We shall enjoy him to all eternity. O blessed world ! Let us hasten unto it ! It is within our reach. The way to it is both plain and easy. The foulest sinner on earth by true repentance and a living faith, may become a pure and holy saint ; and every saint on earth, by steady perseverance, may become a saint in heaven. In the present state of things, *we see through a glass darkly : but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know, even as also I am known.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Holy Lord God, prepare us all for that world of purity and happiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

FRIENDLINESS secures **FRIENDS.**

.....
SERMON XXXIII.
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PROV. xviii. 24.

A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

TO obtain and secure any particular blessing, proper means must be used. Bread is obtained by honest industry; and salvation is obtained by faith and obedience. God having planted a social principle in the human breast, most men pant after friendship; but no man can have *friends* without shewing himself *friendly*. Some men, go where they may, are complaining of numerous enemies. Mankind, with one con-

sent, rise up against them. How does this happen? The fact is, they are enemies to others, and thereby make others their enemies. He who would not be offended must be careful not to give offence. *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly : and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

Three distinct ideas are expressed in our text: We have friends—to secure friends we must show ourselves friendly—and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

I. WE HAVE FRIENDS.

We have many friends by the *ties of nature*. In our infancy, we are supported and protected by the friendship of indulgent parents; in youth we frequently obtain additional friends in brothers and sisters; and, arriving at a state of manhood, we enter into matrimonial connections, and have children who become our friends. Thus, in every age of life, divine providence provides friends for helpless man; and these friends, being *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*, are generally faithful and firm in their attachments. Without *this friendship*, life often proves a burden, and our best enjoyments unsatisfying.

Those who live in the same country—who speak the same language—who are governed by the same laws—and who are accustomed to the same habits and manners, are generally united by the ties of *national friendship*. We ought, indeed, to cultivate a friendly regard for men of all nations; but it seems right to regard those of our own nation more than others. Mutual wants render this necessary; and when national partialities are kept within due bounds, the general good is considerably promoted. Influenced by this friendship, the wise instruct the ignorant—the strong protect the weak and feeble, and every one contributes, more or less to the good of the whole community.

Religious men have *religious friends*. Religion is better calculated, than any other thing, both to form and perpetuate friendship. It forms a similarity of temper in all who feel its happy influence; it inspires them with the same hopes; and engages them in one common cause. All truly religious men have one God—one worship—and one heaven. A mere formal religion, adopted for the sake of temporal advantage, may divide men in their affections, and promote animosity, contention, and strife; but the genuine religion of the heart always produ-

ces peace and harmony. The time, we hope is not far distant, when the pure religion of Jesus shall spread its happy influence over all the earth ; and then the nations will be one, and every man will be acknowledged as a friend and a brother !

There are special *individual friends* whom we chuse for mutual counsel and help ; but the passionate, the selfish, the grossly ignorant, and the wicked should never be amongst our select friends. We should chuse, with the greatest care, the gentle, the liberal, the wise, and the good for our intimate companions. We can unbosom our secrets to them with entire confidence. They rejoice when we prosper, and mourn when we suffer adversity. They defend our characters, maintain our cause, and promote our best interests.

Wicked men have *wicked friends*. Solomon alludes to this where he says, *Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.* Prov. xi. 21. The friendship of the wicked, having sin for its foundation, will end in shame and confusion. It would be better for a man to be confined in a solitary dungeon, all the days of his life, than to be degraded and corrupted by the

friendship of those whom God will treat as enemies. But are such men the enemies of God? Hear what is said by an inspired writer: *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.* James iv. 4.

Some men have many *pretended friends*. This is particularly the case with the rich, the great, and the prosperous. Their pretended friends, actuated by base and mercenary motives, flatter their vanity and feed their pride; but let favours be withheld, and this friendship will quickly end in hatred, reproaches, and illiberal abuse. Happy is the man who keeps these hollow hypocrites at a respectful distance. He prevents much sin in them, and many sad consequences to himself. This worthless tribe, encouraged and supported, would bring a man to ruin, and leave him to perish in his folly.

II. TO SECURE FRIENDS WE MUST SHOW OURSELVES FRIENDLY.

A good man will show himself friendly even to his enemies. He will conduct himself upon such a plan, that no man can be his enemy but one who is an enemy to God and man. To engage

friends, we must show ourselves friendly in our *looks*. A sour, stern, peevish or contemptible look, has a direct tendency to create enemies ; because men judge of the internal disposition by the countenance. A cheerful smile is calculated to soften the hardest heart. Who can withstand its influence ? How easily might we, by this means, secure the friends we have, and make ourselves no more enemies. But if we are resolved to carry ourselves towards others with haughty airs of self-importance, and with proud disdainful looks, we may prepare for painful consequences. Let us then, in the sincerity of our hearts, put on a pleasant, agreeable, cheerful, condescending countenance, and the result will be both pleasing and profitable. When God is dishonoured we may be under the necessity of a different look ; but even then our looks should have a mixture of pity and compassion.

Friendly looks must be followed by friendly *words*. Who can bear to be insulted ? A worm, when trod upon, may turn again. Angry words produce anger ; but a soft answer turneth away wrath. Prov. xv. 1. How can we hope for the love of that man whom we abuse ? An angry

quarrelsome man may reply, *I do not want the friendship of those with whom I take these liberties*; but, remember, thou art but a man. The time may come, when thy circumstances may be so much changed, that the meanest may have opportunities of retaliation. But perhaps it may be further urged *they deserve abuse*. That may be the case; but will abuse do good either to thee or them. Perhaps another person may say, *I like to speak all my mind: what care I for your mealy mouthed fellows who never utter an angry word?* Men of this temper would do well to study the following important passage: *A fool uttereth all his mind; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.* Prov. xxix. 11. But says another, *I love honesty.* Honesty we allow is a good thing; but are none entitled to this character but a few passionate hot-headed-fools? A prudent man is honest in his heart, calm in his tempers, and temperate in his words.

We should be careful to shew ourselves friendly in our conversation about *absent persons*. It should be a rule, a fixed and unalterable rule, never to speak a word of an absent person which we should either be afraid or ashamed to speak in his presence. Perhaps you say,

we mentioned it as a secret not to be divulged. True, but if you could not keep that secret yourselves, how could you expect others to keep it? Besides, it is not only unchristian, but unmanly to attack an absent person. By this means perpetual enmities are kept up. It makes the thing still worse, if, while we abuse a person behind his back, we keep up a show of friendship before his face. There is so much of the devil in this conduct, that the man who is guilty of it, is fit for no society but that of infernal spirits. If we can do absent persons any good, let us do it; but if we cannot, let us resolve to do them no harm.

Looks and words are cheap; and therefore we should show ourselves friendly in *our actions*. This will complete our title to the friendship of others. Are they hungry? let us feed them. Are they naked? let us clothe them. Are they sick or in prison? let us visit them. Are they in danger? let us protect them. Are they ignorant? let us instruct them. Are they wicked? let us try to reform them. When they weep, let us weep; when they rejoice, let us rejoice. If we envy men in prosperity, and neglect them in adversity, how can we expect their friendship? It may not be in our power

to do good extensively ; but if power to do good be the rule of our conduct, we shall please both God and men. In this respect let us spare no pains ; let us lose no time. It is but little good that the best and ablest can do ; but let not that consideration be a plea for neglecting what we can do. *As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* Gal. vi. 10.

III. THERE IS A FRIEND THAT STICKETH CLOSER THAN A BROTHER.

But who is that friend ? Where can he be found ? What is his character ? God is a friend to all his creatures ; especially to holy men. His throne is in heaven ; but mortals may find him upon earth. This friend is not *far from every one of us : for in him we live, and move, and have our being.* Acts xvii. 27, 28. He is an all-wise, all-powerful, and ever present friend. He can supply all our wants, protect our persons, and fill us with substantial happiness. He is kind and condescending, and the meanest mortal may secure his approbation.

But, if we would enjoy the friendship of God, we must show ourselves friendly towards him.

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Sinners are his enemies, and fall under his frowns. To secure his friendship, we must cast away our transgressions, depend upon the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, make the divine will the rule of our conduct, and be friendly to the cause, and the people of God.

God is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother. The friendship of heaven, towards the worthy, is constant and eternal. The affections of a brother may change; but God changeth not. A brother may be reduced so low as to be unable to afford the smallest help; but God is an inexhaustible fountain of all we want. He sticketh close to his people through life, in the solemn hour of death, and to all eternity. We have nothing to fear while we remain faithfully and constantly attached to his cause. Human friends may fail—a brother may die—but God will never fail.

Henceforth let us use every possible means to make the wise and good amongst men our friends; let us improve religious friendship; but above all, let us maintain and improve friendship with heaven; for whatever happens to us, in this changeable world, if God be our friend, all will be well. *Amen.*

The CHRISTIAN RACE.

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SERMON XXXIV.

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HEB. xii. 1, 2.

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

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THE words of our text are an inference from the preceding chapter, wherein the apostle gives many instances of triumphant faith amongst the worthies of former ages. Those worthies are brought to view for our encourage-

ment and imitation. Wherefore, let us prepare for the christian race, and so run that we may obtain the prize. Each particular, in this passage, leads to that which immediately follows, and, therefore, we shall begin with the first, and proceed regularly to the last.

I. WE ARE COMPASSED ABOUT WITH A CLOUD OF WITNESSES.

Here is an undoubted reference to the *Olympic Games*, in which races were run for prizes of great value. Those games were attended by vast numbers of people from all *Greece*, from the extremities of *Egypt*, from *Lybia*, *Sicily*, and other countries, who were spectators of every combat, and of every race. Thus good men, who run for a prize of infinite value, are beheld by numerous spectators. The cloud of witnesses, here referred to, are the pious of former days, who are represented as looking on to see how we acquit ourselves. They are called a *cloud*, on account of their number ; perhaps because a cloud contains a vast number of drops. Besides these, our conduct is witnessed by God, by men, and devils. All look on to see how we proceed in this important race.

II. THE SPECTATORS BEING ASSEMBLED WE MUST PREPARE TO RUN.

We must lay aside every weight, and cast off every incumbrance: we should take nothing which will retard our progress. Sin is properly called a weight. It not only binds us down to the earth, but wearies and fatigues us in the discharge of duty. Lay aside every sin, however pleasing or profitable it may appear. Unbelief, covetousness, pride, lust, and passion, are deadly weights. Give them all up at once, or you cannot run the christian race.

Even our *besetting sin* must be laid aside. That is our besetting sin to which we are most addicted, and by which we are the easiest overcome. Our besetting sin may be constitutional; or it may arise either from education, employment, or our particular situation in life. It may vary. That which beset us once may not beset us now; and that which besets us now may not always beset. Let us, however, find it out, and for ever lay it aside. It may be like a *right eye* or a *right hand*; but pluck the one out, and cut the other off.

III. THUS PREPARED, WE MUST RUN WITH PATIENCE THE RACE SET BEFORE US.

The race is *set before us*. It is clearly marked out, so that we have not to run in an uncer-

tain way. It is set before us in the scriptures; by the ministers of Christ; and by the Spirit of God. The way is inward and outward holiness. No other way than this is set before us by the Lord; and we must be careful not to run in a way of our own.

We must *run*. Running implies great exertion of bodily strength; and this figure is used to teach us the necessity of calling forth all our strength, and exerting all our power in the discharge of christian duties. Run as Lot ran out of Sodom: as the manslayer to the city of refuge. Thy life is at stake. Ruin is behind, and pursues thee fast. O run from danger! Safety, peace, and glory, are before thee. O run forward! Haste thee on the way! Thou hast no time to lose!

We must run with *patience*. Difficulties and dangers call for patience. Our way will lead to both; but let patience have its perfect work. The apparent length of the way will require patience. When we set out at first we think of being soon at the mark; but after running sometime, perhaps, it may appear a great way off: but let us exercise patience a little longer, and we shall have the prize.

IV. WHILE WE RUN WE MUST CONSTANTLY LOOK UNTO JESUS

It is not one view of Jesus that will answer our purpose. *Looking* is a continued act, and it will be necessary for us to look to him all the way. Our eye must be fixed upon him every step we take.

We must look to Jesus as our great exemplar. He has gone before us. View his spotless life, his zeal for God, his benevolence for men, and his steady perseverance to the end.

We must look to Jesus as beginning and carrying on the great work of redemption and salvation. See him in the stable at Bethlehem; in his poverty at Nazareth; in his agony and bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane; in the hands of the furious deluded rabble; in the hands of Pilate, scourged, and crowned with thorns. See him on the cross; in the tomb; rising again; at the right hand of God; and coming again to judge the world.

We must look to Jesus for direction in difficulties; for protection in danger; for support in weakness; and for comfort in distress.

V. JESUS IS THE AUTHOR AND THE FINISHER OF OUR FAITH.

Jesus is the *author* of our faith, as he has revealed those blessed truths which we believe. We do not build our faith upon either creeds, articles, liturgies or homilies; but upon the infallible words of our Lord. Articles and creeds may possibly be good; but the New Testament is better than them all.

Our Lord is the author of that faith which brings salvation. It is through him that we have a power to believe, and that our faith justifies, sanctifies, and overcomes the world. He is the finisher of this faith, both as it centres in him, and as by his blessing it is perfected in us.

VI. FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE JESUS HE ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISED THE SHAME, AND IS SET DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

The joy set before our Redeemer was the prospect of saving lost sinners, and of being exalted himself, in his human nature, to high honours in the upper world. We have also a joy before us similar to his; for we may be useful to men, and our souls may be exalted to the heavenly world.

To obtain that joy he *endured the cross*. The

death of the cross was painful ; but he endured without a murmur. O follow him in this respect ! You have a cross to endure ; but endure as seeing the Invisible, and keep an eye to the recompense of reward.

The cross was ignominious ; but he *despised the shame*. It was below him to notice it. Let this be the case with us. Let us despise the ignorant reproaches of men. If we shun either the pain or the shame of the cross we shall lose the crown.

After the death of the cross, Jesus *sat down at the right hand of God*. The phrase denotes a settled state of honour and glory. In that state he does not forget us ; but pleads our cause with the Father. O let us raise our affections to him, that we may sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus !

To conclude: Have we begun to lay aside our weights ? Have we begun to run ? What progress have we made ? Do we look to Jesus ? Let us try ourselves. Ye who scarcely walk, whose hearts are cold, now arise, strip off your sins, make a beginning, and hold on your way, that you may at length obtain the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

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CHRIST our GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

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SERMON XXXV.

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HEB. iv. 14—16.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities : but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

WHEN this epistle was written, the converted Hebrews laboured under a violent persecution, and the evident design of the writer was to guard them against apostasy. The character of Jesus was degraded by the Jews ; but

here it is represented in all its greatness and glory. The law of Moses was extolled above measure ; but here it is proved that the gospel is far superior. It is also proved that Christ is superior to Moses : that to refuse him will meet with greater punishment than that which was inflicted under the law : that Christ has provided a rest for persevering believers : that the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword : and that having a great high priest who has passed into the heavens, we should hold fast our profession, and come boldly to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. This passage furnishes us with the following important observations :

I. WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST, THAT HAS PASSED INTO THE HEAVENS, JESUS THE SON OF GOD.

The law being a shadow of goods things to come, we may consider the jewish high priests as types of Christ. They were great men in the sight of Israel ; but their greatness was only that of frail mortals. Christ, the christian high priest, took upon him the infirmities of men ; but *in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Col. ii. 9. Finding him set forth, in the

holy scriptures, as the Maker, Preserver, Saviour, and Judge of the world, we are constrained to say, he is a great high priest. Come, poor desponding christian, be encouraged by a view of his greatness, and go on thy way with boldness.

Our high priest is *Jesus the Son of God*. Jesus is called the Son of God both on account of his miraculous conception, and his resurrection from the dead ; but he is the Son of God in a higher sense. He is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.” How he was begotten we neither know, nor need to know ; but that he possesses the nature of God, as properly as a child of man possesses the nature of man, is most clearly revealed in the word of God.

Jesus our high priest has *passed into the heavens*. The open air is called heaven ; the region of the stars is also called heaven ; but the third heaven, to which the apostle Paul was caught up, is the heaven into which Jesus has passed. As the jewish high priest entered once a year into the holy of holies in the temple, to

present before the Lord the blood of the yearly atonement, so Jesus has entered the holy place to present his blood before the Father on our account.

II. THIS SHOULD ENCOURAGE US TO HOLD FAST OUR PROFESSION.

As christians we *profess* to have renounced the world, to believe in Jesus, and to love and obey God. We profess to be men of another world, and to have our treasure and our hearts in heaven. This is a high profession, and far more honourable than any other. Some pretend to conceal their religion, for fear of appearing hypocrites, when probably they have none to conceal ; but, a real christian, comes boldly forward and professes his Lord before men.

We must *hold fast* our profession. A mere profession is easily held fast ; but the true idea of holding fast our profession, is, that we hold fast those things which we profess. We may naturally suppose that the primitive christians, continually exposed to insults, losses, banishment, and death, would not hold fast a profession after they had lost the possession of pure religion. The devil may tempt, lust may entice, and the world may frown ; but let us hold

fast. If we give way, we shall perish ; if we hold fast, we shall be saved.

III. THE COMPASSION OF OUR HIGH PRIEST IS A FURTHER ENCOURAGEMENT TO HOLD FAST.

Our high priest is *touched* with a feeling of our infirmities. The word *infirmity* means both weakness and affliction. Our high priest knows both ; for his eyes are ever upon us. He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities ; he commiserates our case, and sympathizes with us. How is a tender parent touched with the sufferings of a child ? Judge, ye fathers and mothers, who have suffering children. Thus Jesus is touched when his followers suffer. When we are touched with a feeling of the sufferings of others, we hasten to their relief ; and Jesus hastens to our relief. This is what is meant : we cannot suppose that our high priest has now the painful feelings of humanity ; but he has both power and willingness to come to our help. O Christians, how great is this encouragement ! There may not be a man on earth who either knows your infirmities, or feels for you when they bow your spirits down ; but you have a friend in heaven who knows all you suffer, who feels for you, and who will afford delivering grace.

Jesus our high priest was *tempted in all points* like as we are, yet without sin. Are we tried with poverty? He had not where to lay his head. Are we despised of men? He was both despised and rejected. Are we tempted by the devil? The devil tempted him in the wilderness of Judea. But temptation and sin are very different things. Sin is a transgression of the law; and if we do not transgress, whatever our temptations are, we remain innocent. Jesus was tempted; but he was without sin. His nature was pure, and his obedience was perfect. Let us imitate him, and though we cannot expect a deliverance from temptation, while we remain in this world, yet let us seek a full deliverance from sin.

IV. HAVING SUCH A GREAT HIGH PRIEST, WE MAY GO BOLDLY TO A THRONE OF GRACE, WHERE WE SHALL OBTAIN MERCY AND FIND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED.

God, as the governor of all created beings, sits upon a throne of glory—as judge of the world, he will sit upon a throne of awful justice in the day of judgment—but he now sits upon a throne of grace. The idea conveyed by this representation, is, that God is graciously disposed towards his rebellious subjects. God might command us to appear before a throne of

justice, to receive that sentence of condemnation which our sins deserve. Were he to do so, we should approach with dreadful fear and terror. But, through a blessed Mediator, mercy is proclaimed, and the worst of offenders may obtain reconciliation.

We may come *boldly* to the throne of grace. All our prayers, whether private or public, should be addressed to God upon this throne. Let us come to it every day, and every hour. Coming boldly does not imply impudence and audacity, but humble confidence. Let us not be afraid. Though we are sinners we have nothing to fear in coming to this gracious throne. It was set up for sinners. We go, not to a sin-avenging God, but to a sin-pardoning God, who waits with open arms to receive returning sinners.

Let us go to the throne of grace for *mercy*. Mercy is ever needful. The children of God have need of mercy. They may say daily, *Forgive us our trespasses*. Matt. vi. 12. When we seek mercy at this throne, we are always successful. The words are not, come and *ask* for mercy, though that is implied; but come and *obtain* mercy. The apostle had no doubt of mer-

cy being obtained by all who would humbly go to a merciful God. Go then, and he will blot out all your sins, and pardon all your iniquities.

We go to this throne for *grace to help in time of need*. Though there is no time in which we do not need the grace of God, yet there are some particular times in which we need it more than at other times. Thus it is a time of need, when overwhelming temptation scome—when terrible storms of persecution arise—when poverty, hunger, and nakedness are our lot—and when pain and weakness seize our frail bodies. But let us not yield to anxious thoughts about these things. It will be time enough when they come to look for helping grace: nor shall we look in vain. *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass: and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.* Deut. xxiii. 25.

Thanks be to God for such a high priest, and for such a throne of grace! How highly are we favoured! Let us improve our privileges, bear up under our calamities, and endure to the end. Then, after having been conversant with God upon the throne of his grace, we shall see and enjoy him for ever upon the throne of his glory.

Amen.

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THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION.

SERMON XXXVI.

PHIL. iii. 3.

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

THERE were many painful disputes in the primitive church, upon the subject of circumcision. That rite, no doubt, was of divine appointment; but being abolished by the death of Jesus, it was unlawful to practise it in the christian churches. Hence the apostle Paul calls the advocates of circumcision, *The Concision*, a contemptuous appellation, denoting *an evil cutting and mangling of the flesh.* Then he proceeds to point out the true circumcision; or those, who under the gospel-

dispensation, are in covenant with God : *They worship God in the spirit—rejoice in Christ Jesus—and have no confidence in the flesh.*

I. THEY WORSHIP GOD IN THE SPIRIT.

In the heathen world men worshipped idols ; but christians worship the ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD. This must appear very fit and proper to every man of reflection. Are we not the creatures of God ? Does he not supply our wants ? Are we not preserved and protected by his power ? Is not He an all-perfect being ? Who then can doubt the propriety of paying divine honour to Him ? Every man, that is not a downright atheist, must acknowledge that God should be worshipped.

The word *worship* is very extensive in its signification. It includes all that reverence, love, and adoration, which a pious man feels in the discharge of religious duties, both in the church and in the field. Upon this plan God may be worshipped at all times, in all places, and in all things. But, every man of God, devotes certain portions of his time, to the discharge of those sacred duties, which, in a peculiar sense, may be called the worship of God. These duties comprehend prayer and praise, reading and

hearing the word of God, and mixing with religious assemblies, where God manifests his presence.

The jews worshipped God with a great deal of external pomp and parade; but christians worship him in *spirit and in truth*. Their hearts are engaged in this solemn duty; and they are favoured with the assistance of the Holy-Ghost. Forms, when accompanied with right dispositions, are not only useful, but absolutely necessary: but when worship is merely formal, it is rank hypocrisy and atheistical mockery. The sincere christian looks through forms—prays from his heart—reads the scriptures with reverence—and hears the word with gratitude. When he bows the knee in prayer, his spirit bows down before the Lord, and his praises are the pure effusions of gratitude and love.

II. THEY REJOICE IN CHRIST JESUS.

Christ was despised and hated by the jews without a cause. And, what is very remarkable, their descendants, in every age, though favoured with the best means of information, have been as much opposed to Christ as their forefathers. Their deep-rooted prejudices arise partly from *natural obstinacy*, and partly from

judicial blindness. Put the true circumcision rejoice in Christ Jesus as their teacher—as their Saviour—and as their judge.

The doctrines which Christ taught, though humbling to human nature are a source of joy to a true believer. What can be more so than the doctrine of the atonement—the pardon of sins—the influences of the spirit—the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life? Christ was an infallible teacher. Hosts of enemies, with the subtilty and malice of devils, have attacked his doctrines; but all their efforts have proved vain. The more his doctrines are examined, the more they are admired. What cause of joy to the humble followers of the Lamb!

Christ is the *Saviour* of the true circumcision. His doctrines, in many instances, are realized in their experience. Through him their sins are blotted out and they have peace with God: through him they are united to God, and are made partakers of the divine nature: through him they conquer the world, the flesh and the devil: through him they are saved from all sinful practices, and from all tormenting fears of death and a future state. On these grounds they rejoice in Christ Jesus. It may be said to

them, in the words of the Apostle Peter, *Whom having not seen ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* 1 Pet. i. 8.

It is no small source of joy that Jesus will be their judge. When persecutions depress their spirits, they rejoice in the prospect of that day when Jesus will sit in judgment both upon them and their persecutors. That day, so much dreaded by all the enemies of Jesus, is, to them, a day of hope. Then the judge, who cannot depart from the strictest rules of impartial justice, will prove their friend ; and they already joyfully anticipate the high honours which will be conferred upon them in that day of holy triumph.

In short, the true circumcision rejoice in the personal glories of Christ—in all his offices—in all his doctrines—in all his commands—in all his promises—in all his threatenings—and in all his ordinances. They even glory in his cross, which some consider as the scandal of christianity. *God forbid, saith the Apostle Paul, that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* Gal. vi. 14.

III. THEY HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH.

The Apostle Paul informs us, in the following verses, what he meant by the flesh : *I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more : circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless.* Ver. 4, 5, 6. It is plain from this statement that the Apostle refers to privileges, and to external performances, neither of which can be relied upon with safety.

As to outward privileges, he was of the stock of Israel—of the tribe of Benjamin—an Hebrew of the Hebrews, or an Hebrew both by his father and mother's side—and he had been circumcised on the eighth day. Thus we may have descended from pious ancestors—and may have been baptized in the name of Father, Son, and Holy-Ghost. But what good can we expect from these things while we live in sin ? A wise father may have a foolish son : a good father may have a bad son : and no man is either better or worse for what his ancestors have

been. What ground of confidence is there either in the outward rite of circumcision, or of baptism? Nothing done for us in this way can save our souls. Our parents might do their duty in dedicating us to God, when we were infants; but perhaps we have renounced him ever since reason began to dawn.

Outward performances are not a safe ground of confidence. Paul was a strict Pharisee—a zealous persecutor—and a steady observer of the law. But all his professions and performances could not save him. A natural man may make a profession, and attend strictly to outward forms, but until he receives Christ, and is renewed by grace, he neither can obey God acceptably, nor enjoy him as his portion. What is outward appearance in the sight of that God who searches the heart! A man may go to church—pay his debts—avoid gross sin, and still remain in the *gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.* Acts viii. 23.

Let us now, briefly, sum up this fine description. When light shines upon the mind of man, the first discovery which he makes is the being and perfections of God. Hence follow inward adoration and spiritual worship. But when the

mind acquires enlarged views of those perfections, and of the degraded state of human nature, a mediator appears necessary. Jesus, the only mediator between God and man, then appears lovely in all his offices and characters. The soul looks to him with humble confidence, and, that moment, all confidence either in external privileges or performances entirely ceases. The believer builds upon a rock, and enjoys peace and safety. Is this our experience? Can we rejoice in Jesus? The men of the world rejoice in honour, wealth, and power; but christians rejoice, both in prosperity and adversity, in the Lord who bought them. Let it be our ambition to live and die with the humble followers of our Lord; and, when time is no more, may we still worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

THE DAY DEVOTED to the LORD.

SERMON XXXVII.

PROV. xxiii. 17.

But be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

RELIGION is of infinite importance, and should be constantly pursued. Other things, of less importance, may be laid aside occasionally ; but religion should be kept up continually. It should be followed not only every day in the year, but every hour in the day. That moment which is not spent in the fear of the Lord, is a moment of sin, and will be followed by a portion of suffering. A man cannot, indeed, be always upon his knees in prayer ; he cannot always be singing hymns of praise ; he cannot al-

ways be discoursing upon religious subjects : but he may be always religiously disposed ; he may carry religious tempers into every business of life ; and may mix every other duty with reverence, prayer, and praise. *Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*

Here are two things : first, we should fear the Lord ; and, secondly, we should continue in his fear all the day long.

I. WE SHOULD FEAR THE LORD:

JEHOVAH, here translated Lord, is that self-existent being, who *was*, who *is*, and who *will be* forever. This wonderous Name denotes his absolute, independent, and eternal existence. He possesses all possible perfections ; and is the fountain of all wisdom, power, and goodness. Angels adore Him, and those of his creatures who know him best, admire him most.

There is a *slavish* fear of God, which devils feel, and which is felt by many wicked men. This fear is founded either in a conviction of guilt which must be punished, or in gross ignorance of Jehovah's character. Devils and the damned fear that wrath which their crimes have justly provoked ; and many wicked men,

like trembling slaves, fear the Lord as a cruel tyrant. But is our Lord a cruel tyrant? What says the word of inspiration? *The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.* Psal. cxlv. 9.

A *filial* fear, from *filius* a son, is that fear which God commands, and which is so frequently spoken of in terms of the highest approbation. This fear implies reverence, love, and obedience. A view of JEHOVAH's excellencies excites reverence; the same view excites admiration and love; and these, sweetly combined, produce a fear of offending. Thus a worthy son looks up to his father as a superior being, loves him, and would not willingly offend. When this principle is deeply rooted in the heart, sin becomes hateful. Hence pious men have preferred death, in its most terrific forms, to the indulgence of any known sin. No wonder, therefore, that the fear of the Lord should be so extensively applied in the Holy Scriptures. It frequently signifies every branch of inward religion. In our text it implies that habitual reverence and love of Jehovah, which leads to every good word and work.

II. WE SHOULD CONTINUE IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD ALL THE DAY LONG.

Every day should be begun, carried on, and ended in the fear of the Lord. The following plan, suggested to the author, many years ago, by an excellent discourse in *Bennett's Christian Oratory*, is well calculated to promote this important duty.

The moment we awake, let us, like David, feel ourselves in the divine presence, *When I awake, I am still with thee.* Psal. cxxxix. 18. We should then survey his glories, that we may admire him; recollect our obligations, that we may praise him; and feel our wants, that we may pray to him. Thus our first thoughts will be sweet and refreshing, and a good foundation will be laid for a pious conduct throughout the day.

When we are dressed let us immediately engage in *solemn set devotion.* David says, *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.* Psal. v. 3. It would prove a blessing, at that early period, to read a select portion of the Holy Scriptures. The labouring poor, indeed, have not much time to spare; but one half-hour might be spent in this way by those who are the most busily engaged in the active

duties of life. Those who cannot do it on any other plan, might rise a little earlier to engage in this highly important work.

At a convenient hour in the morning, the masters of families should *call their families together*, and join with them in the worship of God. Family worship, when conducted in a right spirit, makes our houses resemble the heavenly temple of Jehovah. By this means both our children, servants, and all who are placed under our care, learn to fear and love the Lord. But let us guard against levity, formality, and irreverence, in family worship. That our morning sacrifice may go up with acceptance, we should be serious, spiritual, and humble before the Lord.

We should carry religious *tempers* into every branch of temporal business; and, while we labour with our hands, devote our hearts to God. That we may do so, our business should be lawful, and our employment useful and honourable. Upon this plan, we shall be as much in the way of duty, when engaged in business, as if we were in our closets. There is a fit time for every thing, which religiously observed, tends to promote both the glory of God and the happiness of man.

Company should be improved to the best of purposes. Let us carefully shun the company of those who do not fear the Lord ; but, when that cannot be done, let us be deeply serious, and sacredly watchful. I said, *I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue : I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* Psal. xxxix. 1. If we can drop an useful word, in such company, let us do it with pleasure ; but, at all events, let us take care that they see nothing in us contrary to our high vocation. *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your goodworks, and glorify your father which is in heaven.* Matt. v. 16.

Let us observe *our meals* religiously. Before we eat, the blessing of the Lord should be craved upon our food. We should eat and drink with moderation, not indulging our appetites either in the quantity or quality of our food, so as to injure our health or unfit us for devotion. *When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee : and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties : for they are deceitful meat.* Prov. xxiii. 1—3. This rule is binding, not only at a princely feast, but at our common tables. When nature is satisfied, we should

sincerely and gratefully return thanks to God, for feeding and nourishing our frail bodies, with the food which perisheth.

After *dinner* it would be profitable to retire for devotional purposes ; because at that season we generally have a few leisure moments upon our hands. It appears from the following passage that this was the practice of pious David : *Evening and morning and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud : and he shall hear my voice.* Psal. lv. 17. *Daniel kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God.* Dan. vi. 10. It is a frivolous objection, that we are generally so dull and heavy after dinner as to be unfit to go into the solemn presence of God ; because that dullness and heaviness is effectually prevented by temperance and sobriety.

Our *diversions* should be consistent with the fear of the Lord. These, indeed, should be very sparing, and always innocent. Some, who put evil for good and good for evil, call those innocent diversions which have a direct tendency to corrupt the heart ; but we may try them all by the following queries : Can we engage in them with a single eye to the glory of

God? Will they leave a savour of religion behind? Shall we feel as great a relish for religion after them as we did before? In short, can we pursue them in the fear of the Lord?

The *christian temper* should be maintained amidst all the varying occurrences of the day. Many things may happen in the course of a day to move our anger; but let us put on meekness. When tempted to murmur and complain, let us review our mercies, and be thankful: when occasions of levity occur, let us seriously reflect that we are in the awful presence of JEHOVAH: when a sour or peevish temper would prevail, let us recollect that it is our duty to *rejoice evermore*. Finally, let us watch against every evil which may rise up in our breast, neither indulging improper thoughts, nor sinful affections; and then our minds will be kept in peace all the day long.

In the evening let us again call our families together to worship the Lord: thanking him for the mercies of the day, and committing both them and ourselves to the guardian care of heaven. Then we may hope to spend the dark and silent watches of the night in peace and

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safety. Our sleep will be refreshing, our dreams will be sanctified, and neither wicked men, nor evil spirits, will be suffered to do us any harm. If death approach, in the hours of sleep, we shall die in peace and safety, and enter into that glory which is prepared for them that fear the Lord.

Lastly, let us *retire* and conclude the day in secret devotion. It would be useful, in our retirement, to sit down a few moments to review the principle occurrences of the day. By that means we should be prepared to kneel down to confess our sins—to pray for pardon—to thank God for his goodness—and to beg a continued enjoyment of his loving kindness and tender mercy.

Had we spent all our days upon this plan, happy would it have been for us—for our families—and for all with whom we have had connexions! But, alas, this has not been the case! Many of our days have passed away unimproved, and stained with abominable crimes. May we, henceforth, be divinely assisted to redeem the time which has been lost, and when our fleeting days on earth are fled and gone, may we be found in Zion, with all the redeemed of the Lord! *Amen.*

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**DUTY of SEARCHING the SCRIP-
TURES.**

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SERMON XXXVIII.

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JOHN. v. 39.

Search the Scriptures:

THOSE men who deny the divine authority of the bible, are unacquainted with its excellencies. Were they to bestow *half the pains* in searching this blessed volume; that they do in searching for arguments against it, they would soon acknowledge, with that correct reasoner, Mr. Locke, that “ it hath God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without a mixture of error, for its matter.”

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When Christ appeared in our nature, he gave evident proofs that he was sent of God ; but the unbelieving Jews rejected him. To convince them that he was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God, he referred them to the scriptures. *Search the scriptures*, said he, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me.*

Let us, first, make a few general observations upon the scriptures ; and, secondly, consider the duty of searching them.

I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS UPON THE SCRIPTURES.

The scriptures referred to in our text, are the *books of the old testament* ; for, when Jesus spake these words, the books of the new testament, were not written. The new testament, however, is of equal authority with the old ; and they will either stand or fall together. The old testament without the new is incomplete ; but both contain a full and sufficient revelation of the will of God to man. Whatever, therefore, may be said in this discourse, must be understood of all the scriptures.

As the scriptures are known by several names,

we should endeavour to understand the meaning of those names. The word *bible* signifies *the book*, and this name is given to the scriptures by way of eminence and distinction. The *bible* is the book of books. The word *testament* signifies a *will* or *covenant*. This name is given because these books contain the substance of God's covenant with the Jews under the legal dispensation, and the substance of the christian covenant, which was sealed by the blood of Christ. The word *scripture* signifies a *writing*. This name is given, because the mind of God is written in these books, and is not left, as it formerly was, to uncertain tradition. These books are called the *oracles* of God, because they contain those wise and certain answers which God has given, from his holy place, to the enquiries of his people. These books are called the *word of God*, because they were written by his authority, and under his direction. The word *holy* is often connected with other titles, to express the pure quality, and the holy tendency of these books.

All the scriptures are *divinely inspired*. The men who wrote them professed to be inspired; and they have left such proofs of their honesty, wisdom, and integrity, that we cannot doubt

their profession. The *matter* contained in the scriptures is so pure, and its tendency so good, that it must needs have God for its author. The *mighty miracles* which were wrought to prove the truths which are recorded in the scriptures, afford a strong proof that they have God for their author. The wonderful *prophecies* contained in these books could not be the production of mere men. Every prophecy discovers the wisdom of that God who declares *the end from the beginning*. Isa. xlvi. 10. These books, like the works of creation, will bear *repeated examination*: and the more industriously we search, the more beauties we discover. And, what convinces me as much as any thing that the scriptures are inspired of God, is, that the pious and good always *relish them*; but that they are always offensive to the impious and wicked. Infidels, actuated by the spirit of the devil, have endeavoured to overthrow them; but, after every attempt, they still stand firm, being built upon the *rock of truth*.

II. THE DUTY OF SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.

While others search the works of nature, and the laws of nations, let us search the infallible records of truth. Do we want wisdom to guide our steps through this dark world? Do we want consolation in distress? Do we want to find bright

examples of piety? Do we want rational amusement? Let us search the scriptures. Let us search them in our closets, where all is calm and still ; in our families, that our children and servants may be instructed ; and in the public assemblies of religious worship, that all may learn. Let us lay down *rules* to ourselves, in searching the scriptures, and endeavour to abide by them. The following rules may be useful :

Search the scriptures *seriously* and *reverently*. God is so serious in all his commands, promises, and threatenings, that a light and trifling mind cannot profit by the word. Every thing in the scriptures is of serious importance. Let us reverence the Author while we read his word! Look upon *the book* with solemn awe ! We should habituate ourselves, upon opening it, to think, This is the Book of God !

Bless God for a revelation of his will, and search the scriptures *thankfully*. The Roman Catholics do not allow the common people to read this book ; thousands in the heathen world never heard tell of it ; but we are in a protestant nation, and the holy bible, faithfully translated, is put into our hands. Let it be sweet to our taste. *The statutes of the Lord*

sages in their plain grammatical sense. Spiritualizing, so called, frequently betrays great weakness of intellect. Some passages, indeed, must be understood spiritually ; but let us not imagine that the spiritual meaning is some far-fetched allegory. Most passages, in their plain, literal, grammatical sense, convey a spiritual meaning, and establish some spiritual truth.

Search *every part* of the scriptures. Go through all the books regularly. It is wrong to read only here and there a chapter, and here and there a verse. I would advise every one, that he may see the great design of the whole, to begin at the beginning, and go regularly through every book to the end. At least, we should read one book through before another is begun. Thus we shall see all the designs of the Holy Ghost in this revelation; and the result will be a rational and comfortable view of the whole bible.

Search the scriptures *frequently*. Set apart a portion of time every day for this important work, and let no business hinder. When we set about any other business upon this plan, we generally succeed ; and why not in reading the scriptures ? Surely the reading of this book is

of greater moment than any other business. Let us never think the time lost which we spend in this way. We have read volume after volume of mere trash. Novels, plays, and romances have destroyed many of our precious hours. Henceforth may the bible be our delight.

Above all, search the scriptures *practically*. Desire to learn, that thou mayest obey. Bring truth into practice and experience. Then this book will be *a light to thy feet, and a lamp to thy path*. Psal. cxix. 105. To read practically, we must often stop and ask ourselves questions. For instance : I read, *Blessed are the meek* ; and I ask myself, Am I meek ? *Blessed are the merciful* : Am I merciful ? *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart* : Do I thus love him.

Thus while we search the scriptures, we shall feed upon them, and grow up in the life of God. They will be a safe guide to a better state, and a comfort by the way. Let us teach them to our children, and may both they and our children's children read, understand, and obey the heavenly oracles. *Amen.*

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**DIRECTIONS HOW TO HEAR
SERMONS.**

.....

SERMON XXXIX.

.....

LUKE. viii. 18.

Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.

THE most important duties, when improperly performed, are offensive to God. The duty of hearing sermons is vastly important, and yet, how little is it regarded! Some scarcely ever hear at all, and others, who stately attend, hear as if they were not accountable to God. Perhaps there is no duty which is more generally abused than that of hearing the word. Hence we see the necessity of the caution in our text; *Take heed how ye hear.*

Here are two things to be considered : first, we should hear sermons ; and, secondly, we should take heed how we hear.

I. WE SHOULD HEAR SERMONS.

I shall say nothing about the *place* where we should hear the word of God. The best rule, amidst all the sects which divide the christian world, is, to attend that place, where we can be best instructed, and most edified.

That it is a *duty* to hear sermons appears evident from this consideration : God has appointed men to preach the gospel to every creature, and the duty of every creature to hear, is implied in the command to preach. As God is pleased to send his messengers to us, we cannot do less than give them a hearing. God required the Jews to hear his prophets ; Jesus heard the word in the synagogues ; and those who neglect to hear, pour contempt upon that God who gives the word.

To hear the word is a *privilege*. Are we ignorant? The word, faithfully preached, conveys instruction. By this means we learn those important truths which are necessary to salvation. Are we mourning under a sense of sin?

The ministers of the gospel direct us to the Saviour of the world. Are we tried and tempted ? The word not only affords us comfort under every trial and temptation, but points out the means of deliverance. Are we careless and trifling ? The word quickens and enlivens our souls. In short, by hearing we are fully taught what is necessary to be known ; we are warned against what is hurtful ; we are directed to what is good, and we are encouraged by blessed hopes of immortality.

II. WE SHOULD TAKE HEED HOW WE HEAR.

That we may hear profitably, we should *prepare* our minds before-hand ; not daring to run into the presence of God, as the giddy multitude to a play, or other places of amusement. Lay aside every temporal concern, and leave the business of the world behind. Enter your closets, and pray for the blessing of God both upon yourselves, your ministers, and your fellow-worshippers. He who goes from his closet to the house of God, is sure to obtain a blessing.

The mind of every hearer should be divested of *prejudice*. Prejudice against either the place, the minister, the people, the doctrine, or the

mode of worship, will be sure to hinder us of a blessing. Conquer this vile disposition, and hear with candour. Be open to conviction ; and think charitably of all who differ from thyself in opinion. Thus thou wilt be prepared for a comfortable reception of the truth, and for a firm rejection of error.

Hear attentively. When God speaks either by a prophet or by any ordinary messenger, the people should be attentive. The matter of which sermons are composed is in general important, and demands attention. Recollect, the sermon which you now hear may be the last that you shall ever hear. Recollect also that you are to give account for every sermon you hear to the Judge of quick and dead. Attention strengthens the memory ; and those sermons which are heard attentively, are not soon forgotten. That you may be attentive, feel a deep interest in what you hear. If a will be read, in which we are concerned, how attentively we hear !

Hear for yourselves. Some hear only for their neighbours. When a striking remark is made, they think, this will suit such a one, How commonly do we hear people say, ‘I thought of such a one while the preacher was

preaching.' And didst thou forget thyself? Hadst thou no interest in the word? Was there no part suitable to thy case?

As the word of God is a blessing, it, should be heard with *thankfulness*. Surely it is a blessing to sit under the joyful sound. How many there are who never heard the word! How many there are who are hindered by sickness! Bless God, then, for every sermon. Thankfulness for the word will bring thee often under its sound; but if thou art not thankful, thou wilt neglect these precious opportunities.

Mix *faith* with hearing. It is said of the Israelites in the wilderness, *The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard.* Heb. iv. 2. We are not bound to believe every thing that a preacher may advance, for that would be to suppose him extraordinarily inspired; but we should believe all that he advances agreeable to the scriptures, and then our faith will be a means of our profiting. Faith in the commands which may be delivered will lead us to obedience; faith in the promises will afford encouragement; and faith in the threatenings will inspire us with a sacred dread of offending.

Guard against *curiosity* in hearing. Some foolish people run all over the country to hear sermons. They admire great men; but perhaps have little love for practical religion. The messenger is *exalted*, but the message is *neglected*. Men of solid piety fix upon useful preaching, and generally keep to one place; but they do not deem it prudent to sit under an unconverted man; for he runs before he is sent, and can not profit the people at all.

Be a *constant* hearer of God's word. Determine not to be hindered either by business, company, or weather, unless in extraordinary cases. Some, when exhorted to hear the word, reply that they can read a good sermon at home. We do not deny this; but recollect, a sermon heard in the house of God, is often accompanied with the power of that divine spirit who is in the midst of religious assemblies. In God's house we are in God's way; at home we are in our own: so that it is better to hear even a poor sermon in the house of God, than to read a good one at home.

Hear the word *devoutly*. Pray to God to give thee the hearing ear and the understanding heart. Beg earnestly that power may at

tend the word, and that it may be made a general blessing. Often lift up thy heart in short ejaculations for thyself and every person present.

Be an *humble* hearer. We are all unworthy of the word. Some proud spirits come to hear, who hold both the preacher, the people, and the word, in contempt. We sometimes boast that great men were in our assemblies, without considering what spirit they were of; how they despised us; or how they railed against us when they went away.

Apply the word. The preacher must apply; but that will be of little use, unless the hearers apply for themselves. Sermons unapplied, like food undigested, do more harm than good. As a bad digestion is a proof that health is wanting, so a bad application of the word, is a proof that the soul is sickly, and out of health.

After we have heard let us go away silently, enter into our closets, and pray for a sanctified use of what we have heard. It is shameful after a sermon is ended to hear the people begin to talk about common worldly affairs: nor is it less shameful to see them lounge about the door of a place of worship, as if what they had heard were to be

forgotten. Go thou and reduce all to practice. Remember who hath said, *Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.* Luke xi. 28.

These observations, seriously improved, will render the word both pleasing and profitable. Every time we attend the sacred ministry, we shall be both wiser and better than we were before. We shall highly esteem the ministers of Jesus, improve the word which they deliver, and glorify God on their behalf. *Amen.*

PERSEVERENCE in PRAYER.

SERMON XL.

1 THES. v. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

PRAYER to God is a *duty* in which all men should frequently *engage*, and a *privilege* which all may *enjoy*. The man who neglects it cannot live a religious life: for the body may as easily live without breath as the soul without prayer. Prayer is the breath of the soul; and when we cease to breathe after God, we cease to live to God. Let us then *pray without ceasing*.

Two things are clearly taught in this passage:

first, we should pray ; and, secondly, we should pray without ceasing.

I. WE SHOULD PRAY.

Let us make a few general observations upon prayer.

Prayer should be *addressed to God*, who is the fountain of all good. Whatever we want, whether it relate to this world or that which is to come, we should humbly ask at his bountiful hands. While heathens pray to idols, and deluded papists to departed saints, let us pray to the supreme God, who is our father, and the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should pray *in the name of Jesus*. God will not suffer us to approach him in our own name. *I am the way, saith Christ, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.* John xiv. 6. Prayer offered up in the name of Jesus is successful. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* John xvi. 23. How encouraging ! How many hinder themselves of a blessing, by neglecting to pray *in the name of* our adorable Lord !

When we consider the vast distance there is between us and God, it will appear necessary to pray *with humility*. We address a Being whom angels worship with reverence, and before whom they fall on their faces, as a token of deep humility. When Abraham prayed unto the Lord, upon the plains of *Mamre*, he said, *I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.* Gen. xviii. 27. The deeper we sink in humility, the higher we rise in the esteem of God.

All prayer should be offered up *in faith*. We are expressly commanded to *ask in faith*, and it is said, *The prayer of faith shall save the sick.* James v. 15. To pray in faith implies a firm belief that God will both hear and answer our prayer; and this belief is founded on a persuasion that we pray according to the divine will. Hence, we must pray only for lawful things: how can we offer up prayer in faith when we ask for things which are not lawful?

Fervency is necessary in prayer. If our affections are languid, devotion loses its spirit, and degenerates into a worthless form. Christ directs us to be importunate in this solemn duty. This will appear highly necessary when we con-

sider that unless we are importunate, we cannot be in earnest; nor do we see the value and importance of the things for which we pray. To make us feel, therefore, God requires us to be in earnest.

But our fervour in prayer should always be accompanied with *submission*. We should submit to the time when God may please to bless; and when he does not see it fit to answer our prayer at all, we should submit. For sometimes we want a blessing *now*, which may be more fit for us at *another time*; and sometimes our prayers, though lawful and necessary in our own judgment, may not appear so to infinite wisdom. Submission in prayer is founded upon a persuasion that God knows better than we do, both when to bless, and what will prove a real blessing. O leave all to him; for he doeth all things well!

When we engage in prayer, we should seek the *aids* of the *Holy Spirit*. He helps the infirmities of good men. The apostle Jude recommends *praying in the Holy Ghost*. Jude 20. Prayer, without the divine influence of the Spirit, is cold and formal; but, under his influence, there is that life, vigour, and spirituality

in our prayers, which renders them both profitable to us and pleasing to God.

Sincerity of heart is absolutely necessary in prayer. God looks at the heart. Some draw nigh to him with their lips only; but their prayers cannot be heard. Prayer which is not sincere is an awful mockery of God, and sooner or later will be punished with just severity. Let us then draw nigh with our hearts, and let our words, however plain and simple, express our real desires. Recollect, true sincerity in prayer is far more pleasing to God than polished expressions.

Our prayers should frequently be offered up *in secret*. *When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.* Matt. vi. 6. The man who neglects secret prayer is unconcerned about religion; and whatever profession he may make, can only be considered either as a deceiver of others, or one who is deceived himself. O let us often pray to the unseen God, when retired from men, and from the busy scenes of this perish-
ing world!

Secret prayer will prepare us for that which is *public*. We should call our families together, and pray with them, lest the fury of God should be poured out upon us. Recollect the words of Jeremiah, *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name.* Jer. x. 25. We should join the assemblies of God, and pray with them, that our prayers may go up as holy incense before the Lord. How encouraging is the following passage in the book of Revelations: *And another angel came, and stood at the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came up with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand.* Rev. viii. 3, 4.

We should endeavour to pray with *suitable words*. Some, that they may do so, make use of pre-composed forms. We do not absolutely condemn all forms of prayer; but they are in general unnecessary. The real desire of the heart will direct a man to suitable words, at least to such as will please God. Forms cannot suit all cases; and, therefore, no man should be bound to use them upon all occasions. They may

be advantageously used by a man in his family who has not the gift of prayer; for it is better to use a form than to neglect the duty. But all who pray in public, as the mouth of the people, should be able to express themselves in such words as may not be liable to just objection.

In prayer we should pay some attention to the *posture* of our bodies. Three postures, in prayer, are mentioned in scripture, namely, standing, kneeling, and prostration. Let us mostly kneel. It is an humble posture, and more proper in public than prostration. In private, upon particular occasions, we may fall down before the Lord. To *sit* at prayer is an irreverent posture. If we cannot kneel, let us stand up before our God.

II. WE SHOULD PRAY WITHOUT CRASING.

This does not imply that we should *always* be engaged in devotion. Other duties of great importance frequently demand our attention. At the same time, let us not forget to mix prayer with other duties. Mental prayer, or the prayer of the mind, may be engaged in, without vocal prayer, or the prayer of the voice; and short ejaculations may be offered up to God even in the midst of business and company.

But the precept in our text implies *perseverance* in prayer. Every new day should find us still engaged, at proper intervals, in this important duty; and every hour should find us in a devout temper, or what is commonly called the spirit of prayer. Having once engaged in this duty, we must hold out to the end. We shall have as much need of prayer to-morrow as to-day. The daily sacrifices, in the Jewish worship, accompanied with the prayers of the people, were to be kept up without ceasing.

When we cease to pray, either in private or in public, we begin to decline in religion. Then our graces wither—our strength departs—and our enemies triumph. O let us never cease to pray till God shall call us up to heaven, where prayer shall end in everlasting praise. Thus we shall daily have a full supply of blessings; and enjoy perpetual union and communion with our heavenly Father. *Amen.*

THE
NATIVITY of CHRIST.

.....
SERMON XLI.
.....

LUKE ii. 10, 11.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

THE birth of Jesus had been clearly foretold by the Jewish prophets, and long expected by all nations. At length, when the fulness of time was come, he appeared in human nature. An angel from heaven announced his birth to certain poor shepherds, who were watching their

flocks by night. Every thing relating to the invisible world is awful, and the appearance of an angel or spirit is calculated to inspire the boldest mortal with terror. No wonder, therefore, that the shepherds were *sore afraid* when *the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about.* But they were greatly encouraged by the message which he instantly delivered: *Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.*

This passage contains two parts: first, a Saviour was born in the city of David, who was Christ the Lord: secondly, the proclamation of his birth was good tidings of great joy to all people. We shall add a few remarks upon the festival of Christ's nativity.

I. A SAVIOUR WAS BORN IN THE CITY OF DAVID, WHICH WAS CHRIST THE LORD.

Our Saviour was born at the *time foretold by Daniel*, whose seventy weeks were nearly accomplished. Commentators are generally agreed that those were weeks of years; and seventy multiplied by seven, makes *four hundred and ninety*, the exact number of years from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, to the time when the Messiah was cut off.

Jesus, according to the prediction of *Isaiah*, was born of a virgin, by the over-shadowing of the Holy Ghost, that he might not be infected with human depravity. He was born in mean circumstances. The Jews expected a temporal kingdom; but the kingdom of Jesus was to be spiritual. They looked for a temporal prince, clothed with earthly grandeur; but when they saw Jesus, they perceived no beauty, that they should desire him. Christians have very different views of Messiah. To them his birth, though in a stable, appears glorious. They receive the good tidings with grateful hearts; and know, by blessed experience, that he is a Saviour, and a **GREAT ONE.**

Many remarkable circumstances took place at Jesus' birth. Angels came down from heaven to worship at his feet. *When he (the Father) bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.* Heb. i. 6. It has been said by some writers, that the temple of Janus, at Rome, was then shut, in token of universal peace. Those who deny its being shut at that time, allow that the world was then more tranquil than it had been for a long time before, and that the period when Jesus descended upon earth may be cal-

led, *The pacific age.* A favourable time for the setting up of that kingdom which is *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* Rom. xiv. 17.

Some men are scourges to mankind ; but Jesus was born to be a Saviour. *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* 1 Tim. i. 15. Sinners are lost, and none can save them but Jesus ; and he is as *willing* as he is *able* to save all that come unto God by him.

The Saviour of the world was born in *the city of David.* Bethlehem was but little amongst the thousands of Judah ; but it was rendered famous by being the birth-place both of David and of Jesus. The prophet Micah foretold, that Bethlehem the city of David, should have the honour of Jesus' birth. *Thou Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.* Mich. v. 2. The import of the name is a singular circumstance. Bethlehem signifies *The house of bread;* and there that glorious person was born who is called *The bread of life.*

The angel calls our Saviour *Christ the Lord*. Christ in *Greek* has the same meaning as *Messiah* in *Hebrew*. Both words signify, *The anointed*. Christ was not anointed with oil, like the *jewish* priests and kings; but, the *Holy Spirit* at his baptism, anointed him *Prophet, Priest, and King*. As a *Prophet*, he was to teach; as a *Priest*, to atone and intercede; and as a *King*, to govern and judge. He is called *Lord*, as the master and governor of his people; and it is a certain mark of genuine christianity, so to call him *Lord* as to depart from *all iniquity*. Jesus is *Lord* over the true church on earth; he is *Lord* over the glorified church in heaven; and he is *Lord of angels*.

II. THE PROCLAMATION OF OUR SAVIOUR'S BIRTH, WAS GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY TO ALL PEOPLE.

An *angel* proclaimed his birth. Angels are frequently employed in the affairs of men; and no doubt, they deem it an honour to be employed, at the divine command, in the service of the meanest saint. We may suppose, though his name is not mentioned, that this angel was one of the first order and dignity amongst the angels of God, having had the honour, before any other, to announce the birth of Jesus. Flem-

ing thought that this heavenly messenger was a glorified human spirit, and that the host of angels who sung glory to God, were other glorified human spirits; but it is far more probable, as Grötius and Doddridge think, that it was the angel Gabriel.

The proclamation contained *good tidings*. The birth of Jesus was the best news that ever reached the ears of men. Are we in bondage? He was born to set us free. Are we polluted? He was born to make us clean. Are we miserable? He was born to make us happy. Are we in the way to hell? He was born to conduct us to heaven. Long had sin and Satan triumphed over the sons of men—long had the serpent exercised his artful malice: but, lo, the Saviour appeared—the friend of man was born!

Those tidings were matter of *great joy*. Inexpressible joy is felt by all who have a saving interest in Jesus. Every part of our salvation affords great joy. There was great joy amongst the angels when Jesus was born; there was great joy amongst the pious of that day, who were waiting for his coming; and there was great joy amongst those happy spirits in the heavenly world, who had been saved by him be-

fore he came in the flesh. There are different kinds of joy; carnal and spiritual. The joy here mentioned is pure and spiritual, solid and permanent; and far exceeds that which this perishing world can afford.

This proclamation of good tidings was to *all people*. The Jews had been a peculiar people but now the Gentiles were to be called. No future distinction was to be made between one nation and another. People of all nations, and all colours, were to hear the joyful sound of Jesus' birth. The Jews had been separated for the good of other nations, just as God raises up great and good men for the good of others; but under the gospel dispensation, *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.* Col. iii. 11.

III. REMARKS UPON THE FESTIVAL OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

This festival, commonly called Christmas, but more properly *The Nativity of our Lord*, should be observed with universal joy and gladness. Songs of praise should be heard in all our dwellings; and we should meet in joyful assemblies, to celebrate the high praises of our Lord and

Saviour. Our places of public worship, where we meet in the name of Jesus, should ring with loud acclamations to the Son of David.

But, it may be said, to the great scandal of nations professing christianity, that the nativity of our blessed Saviour is generally observed as a carnal festival. Like the feasts of *Bacchus*, amongst the *Greeks* and *Romans*, it is a scene of the wildest confusion, and of the most abominable wickedness. At this Season, Hell seems to be let loose, and devils seem to triumph over the nations. Large companies assemble, in our cities, towns, and villages, to provoke one another to sin. Gluttony, drunkenness, and debauchery; quarrelling, brawling, and fighting, are the reigning sins of this sacred festival. What a wonder it is that God, whose Son is so highly dishonoured, does not overwhelm us with his judgments!

As christians we should spend this day in a grateful remembrance of Jesus' love. Viewing him in his lowly estate we should learn lessons of humility; but viewing his real character, as our lawful King, we should hasten to pay him homage. The heathen *Magi*, guided by a star, found him at Bethlehem, and worshipped at his feet. Let us, under the guidance of a superior

light, pay him those honours which are justly due. At the same time, let the benevolence of our Lord inspire our hearts with love and pity to all the sons of grief and pain. It would be to the honour of all christian assemblies to make public collections, for charitable purposes, on every return of this day. Thus the poor would be made to rejoice—God would look down with approbation—and we might hope for a gracious reward.

There have been various opinions about the precise day on which Jesus was born. Chronologers have placed that event in almost every month in the year. Some think our Saviour could not have been born in the month of December, because the shepherds and their flocks were out in the fields when the angel proclaimed his birth; but they do not recollect the difference of climate between *Judea* and *Britain*; nor even that in our climate it is not always alike cold in this season of the year. We contend not, however, for the day; but we do contend for the thing. It is proper to have a day set apart for this purpose, and to observe it religiously in honour of our Redeemer. May every return of this festival, find us on our way to the heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE
CRUCIFIXION of CHRIST.

.....
SERMON XLII.
.....

LUKE xxiii. 33.

And when they were come unto the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors ; one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

PILATE delivered Jesus to be crucified, because he feared the people ; but his cowardly compliance with their wishes, contrary to his own judgment, has stamped his character with everlasting disgrace. No doubt it behoved Christ to suffer ; but that forms no excuse for the persons who were concerned in that vile transaction. The *salvation* of the world was God's design in suffering his Son to die : the

destruction of his Son was the design of the Jews in seeking his death. They said *This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.* Matt. xxi. 38. We should frequently contemplate the death of our Lord upon the cross, and make those practical improvements which may be of serious importance in future life. That we may do so in a profitable way, let us make a few remarks upon crucifixion—point out some peculiar circumstances which attended our Lord's crucifixion—and then endeavour to improve the whole.

I. REMARKS UPON CRUCIFIXION.

Crucifixion was a *Roman* punishment. The Jews were so completely subdued by the Romans, at the time of our Saviour's death, that they were obliged to submit to their mode of punishing criminals. Thus a remarkable prophecy was fulfilled: *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.* Gen. xlix. 10. There also appeared a remarkable providence of God in ordering it so, that Christ should suffer under a Roman governor, otherwise he had not been crucified according to the prophecies. Zechariah plainly prophesied of his crucifixion; *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.*

Zech. xii. 10. David also foretold the death that he should die ; *They pierced my hands and my feet.* Psal. xxii. 16.

The death of the cross was a *painful* punishment. The pain of crucifixion was so great, that the Romans called the most violent tortures *eruciatus*, or suffering the death of the cross. The person condemned to suffer this death was first *severely* scourged, and then required to bear his cross to the place of execution. There his hands and feet, the most nervous parts of the body, were nailed to the cross, where he hung till he died. The violent distortion of his limbs, which were stretched forth as on a rack, must have caused the most exquisite anguish ; and when we consider the length of time the poor criminal had to endure this pain, the death of the cross must appear terrible. O blessed *Emmanuel*, how great was thy love to sinners, to submit to such dreadful pain on their account !

This punishment was *ignominious*. None suffered crucifixion but those who were accounted the meanest and vilest of men, such as slaves, robbers, movers of sedition, and murderers. Hence we may judge in what light the

wicked Jews viewed our adorable Saviour, whom they treated as one of the meanest and worst of men ; and we see his amazing condescension, in submitting to the punishment of a slave and a transgressor. Let us no longer complain of our reproaches. What is the shame of our profession to that of his sufferings ! Let us despise the shame of his cross, and boldly profess his name amongst men.

II. CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH OUR LORD'S CRUCIFIXION.

Jesus was condemned *unjustly*. We refer to Pilate's testimony to prove this assertion. He declared publicly, after a close examination, *I find in him no fault at all.* John xviii. 38. One of the criminals who suffered with our Lord bore a noble testimony to his innocence, saying, *This man hath done nothing amiss.* Luke xxiii. 41.

Barabbas, an infamous wretch, *was preferred before him.* It was customary at the Passover, for the Roman governor to release to the people a prisoner, whatever his crimes might have been. Upon this occasion they requested Pilate to do as he had ever done unto them ; and, desiring to deliver Jesus, whose innocence

appeared evident, he said, *Whom will ye that I release unto you ? Barrabas, or Jesus, which is called Christ.* Matt. xxvii. 17. *But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus.* Matt. xxvii. 20.

The death of Jesus was occasioned by the *infernal malice* of the Jewish rulers, who hated him without a cause; and who were fully bent upon his death long before his apprehension. Guilty, or not guilty, was not the question; but, influenced by their own passions, they clamoured for his blood. When Pilate, his judge, pleaded his cause, *they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified.* Luke xxiii. 23.

Jesus was *mocked* and *insulted* in his death. Out of derision he was clothed with purple, and crowned with thorns; he was smitten on the head with a reed, and was spit upon. Even when he hung upon the cross they reviled him, and the chief priests and elders mocked him. Civilized humanity pities the worst of criminals in the hour of death; but those barbarians had no pity for the innocent Jesus.

While they were thus employed, the God of heaven, whose honour was insulted, in the person of his Son, gave awful proofs of his *displeasure*. The sun withdrew his light; the earth trembled; the rocks were rent asunder; and the veil of the temple was rent in twain. *When the Centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, truly this was the Son of God.* Matt. xxvii. 54.

Amidst all the abuse of his enemies, Jesus was honoured in his death, by the inscription which was put upon his cross. The inscription expressed his real character: **JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.** John xix.

19. The chief priests perceiving this, and mortified at the circumstance, requested Pilate to alter it, saying, *Write not, The King of the Jews: but that he said, I am king of the Jews.* John xix. 21. Pilate answered, *What I have written, I have written.* Ver. 22.

Several remarkable prophecies were fulfilled at the death of Christ. He was pierced with the nails and the spear, according to the prediction of Zechariah; he was numbered with trans-

gressors, as Isaiah had foretold ; and David's prophecy was fulfilled, *They part my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture.* Psal. xxii. 18. The legs of the other criminals were broken ; but they brake not the legs of Jesus, *that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.* John xix. 36.

At his death a poor criminal obtained mercy. We have only this one instance recorded in the scriptures, of mercy being granted in the last moments of life, lest we should presume upon a late repentance ; but this one instance is recorded that we may not despair of mercy even in the eleventh hour. This poor thief confessed Christ at the time when his disciples had forsaken him ; and he prayed to Christ, at a time when there was no appearance of his being able to answer his prayer ; whence we may infer that he believed on him as the Saviour of the world.

Just before his death, Jesus *forbad the sympathizing tears* of the pious women, who bewailed and lamented him, saying, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.* Luke xxiii. 28. You have many sad sufferings before you, in the calamities which shall befall this nation ; but my sufferings are nearly at an end.

On the cross Jesus *prayed for his enemies*, saying, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* Luke xxiii. 34. What a fine spirit, and how worthy of our imitation ! O what love to sinners, yea the worst of sinners ! He now prays for his enemies at the right hand of God. May they be humbled ; and by true repentance and faith, obtain salvation through his name.

III. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENTS.

Let us carefully guard against those *malignant passions* which influenced the Jews in their cruel clamours for our Saviour's death. They envied his growing popularity ; they hated his doctrines, laws, and worship ; they bore him malice for his faithful reproofs ; and they sought for vengeance, because he had told them the truth. But let us love him for his gracious undertakings, honour his glorious perfections, and obey his high and important commands.

Study, with close attention, the *wonderful designs* of his death. His enemies would fain persuade us that he suffered as a criminal, for his own transgressions ; but we know he never transgressed the laws of God, being *holy, harmless, and undefiled*. Some professing christians

maintain that he only died as a martyr, to seal with blood the doctrines which he taught ; but they either do not understand, or will not admit the evidence of revelation. He died as a *propitiation* for sin, that he might reconcile sinners to God. He died on the cross, that dying mortals might live for ever.

The *evil of sin* appears evident in the death of Jesus ; for that alone rendered it necessary for him to die. Sin is so hateful to God that he determined not to pardon it without a sacrifice, lest the honour of his government should be brought into contempt. Our sins, therefore, were the cause of all those painful agonies which he endured. Had man remained innocent, Jesus would neither have been scourged, crowned with thorns, nor nailed to the accursed tree. O let us hate sin with an eternal hatred ; and let us carefully abstain from *all appearance of evil* ! 1 Thess. v. 22.

Let us make that *use* of Jesus's death which will be most for our own happiness, and the glory of God. We should examine his sufferings with a mixture of grief and joy—we should feel grief for our sins which were laid upon him in that tremendous hour—but we should rejoice in

the atonement which he then made for our souls. Let us depend upon a crucified Redeemer both for present and eternal salvation. Fixed upon this firm foundation, we shall live in peace, die with comfort, and reign with him in glory. In that bright world, a recollection of his sufferings upon the cross will be an everlasting source of happiness to all the saints of God. *Here* they praise redeeming love in songs of joy and gladness ; and *there* these songs of praise shall be continued and perfected.

“Hallelujah they cry, to the King of the sky,
To the great everlasting I AM ;
To the Lamb that was slain, and liveth again,
Hallelujah to God and the Lamb.”

THE
RESURRECTION of CHRIST.

SERMON XLIII.

1 Cor. xv. 20.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

THE resurrection of our Lord was the most important event that ever took place in this lower world. If it can be proved, christianity must stand in spite of all its opposers : if it cannot, our *faith is vain*, and *we are yet in our sins*. We have, however, such proofs of that glorious event as cannot be overturned ; and we may confidently assert, in the language of our text, *Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*

This passage may be divided into two parts: first, Christ is risen from the dead; secondly, he is become the first fruits of them that slept.

I. CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD.

In the presence of vast multitudes Jesus bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. An impious soldier pierced his side with a spear, from whence flowed *blood* and *water*. This important circumstance fully proves the reality of his death; for the wound, reaching his heart, must have caused instant death, had he received it in perfect health.

Being dead, his body was laid in the sepulchre, where it remained till the third day; but his soul went into the invisible world. Some have imagined that he went into the regions of the damned; but, upon serious examination, this appears to be a mere fiction. The prophecy of David concerning this event, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*, means no more than this: Thou wilt not leave my soul in the *hidden* or *invisible* world.* The invisible or hidden world to which

* *הַנֶּגֶד (Sheol)* The invisible state of the dead—the place and state of those who are out of the way, and to be sought for. In this view it seems nearly to answer to the Greek,

our Saviour went was Paradise, as appears from his own words to the penitent thief: *Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* Luke xxiii. 43.

On the third day, the soul of Christ returned from the invisible world, and reanimated the same body which died on the cross. When the soul departs, the body dies; when it returns, and is again united to the body, there is a proper resurrection. The proofs of Christ's resurrection may be reduced to three: the testimony of the disciples—the out-pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost—and the rapid progress of christianity afterwards.

The resurrection of Christ is *fully proved* by the *testimony* of his *disciples*. Testimony may always be relied upon, when those who testify are neither deceived themselves nor design to deceive others; and that this was the case with our Lord's disciples, will be evident upon a fair view of the subject. They could not be de-

Hades, the invisible place; and to our English word *Hell*, which, though now scarcely used but for the place of torment, yet, being a derivative from the Saxon, *Hillan*, or *Helan*, to hide, or from *Holl*, a cavern, anciently denoted the *concealed* or *unseen place* of the dead in general. Parkhurst.

ceived themselves ; for they all saw him, conversed with him, ate and drank with him, handled his body, and saw him ascend into heaven. He appeared **TEN** times before his ascension : To **Mary**, Mark xvi. 9—To *other women*, Matt. xxviii. 9—To *two disciples going to Emmaus*, Mark xvi. 12. Luke xxiv. 13—To **Peter**, Luke xxiv. 34—To *all the disciples*, John xx. 19—To *them again*, John xx. 26—To *the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias*, John xxi. 1—To *the disciples in Galilee*, Matt. xxviii. 16, 17.—To **James**, 1 Cor. xv. 7—And to *the eleven*, Mark xvi. 14. He appeared **THREE** times after his ascension into heaven : To **Stephen**, to **Saul**, and to **John in the Isle of Patmos**.

The disciples of Jesus had no design to deceive *others*. They could have no temptation to such a fraud ; for the whole world was against them. They had nothing to gain by such a fraud ; but much to lose. Did they aim at wealth ? This was the way to poverty. Did they aim at honour ? This was the way to disgrace. Did they aim at ease ? This was the way to hardships, toils, and death. What, then, but truth, could induce them to declare the resurrection of Christ from the dead ? It is also very remarkable that his resurrection in-

spired them with uncommon boldness. Before it happened they were remarkably timid and fearful ; but afterwards they neither feared men nor devils. It is not less remarkable that they were all united in their testimony. Some of them doubted at first, and they all appear to have been slow of belief ; but they had such evidence as removed every doubt. Nor could all their sufferings afterward, even death in its most dreadful forms, induce one of them to doubt, much less to deny this wonderful event.

We may just notice an objection : *Did not the Jews account for his removal from the sepulchre another way?* They certainly did ; but their account confirms that of the disciples. They forged a bare-faced lie, and bribed the soldiers to publish it : *Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.* Matt. xxviii. 13. Could they all be asleep at the same time? If they were, how could they tell so exactly what was done? Was it possible for the poor timid disciples, who fled when Jesus was apprehended, to venture through a band of soldiers to steal the dead body of their Master? If the soldiers slept upon guard, why were they not punished with death? But we need not push this enquiry any further : the thing speaks for itself.

It is also worthy of notice, that the account of Christ's resurrection was written and published in the age when, and in the country where he rose from the dead. When the gospels were first published, many of those Jews were still alive who had *killed the Prince of Life*. How easily might they have contradicted the apostles, had they published falsehoods ! How ready would they have been with their deep rooted malice, could they have done it with credit to themselves ! But who did contradict them ? Can we produce one writer, either jewish or pagan, who dared to call in question the plain, simple, and honest account of the holy apostles ? I never heard that any one ever attempted to do so ; and if any one had, the vain attempt would have strengthened the cause of christianity.

The *out-pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost*, is another strong proof of Jesus' resurrection. He had said, in the days of his flesh, *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him*. John xvi. 7. Just before his ascension he commanded them *not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father*, to send the Spirit down in his miraculous influences. Ac-

cordingly, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the promise was fulfilled ; and the apostles were extraordinarily qualified for an extraordinary work. They were enabled to speak a variety of languages, and to work astonishing miracles in the name of Jesus. The effects of that day were soon discovered, not only in Judea, but in every part of the Roman empire : and if there had been any doubts of Jesus's resurrection before that memorable day, those doubts must have been removed by the irresistible proof which was given in the descent of the Holy Ghost.

The rapid progress of Christianity, immediately after that day, forms another powerful argument in favour of Christ's resurrection. The world was soon turned *upside down*. The heathen oracles were silenced, their temples were shut, their altars were thrown down ; and Christianity, through the instrumentality of a few poor fisher-men, triumphed every where. Surely the God of truth was with them. All the world was in arms against the apostles, and every means that could be devised was used to crush them ; but all in vain. God being with them, the word *grew and multiplied*. Can we suppose that the God of truth would have sanc-

tioned a lie? We allow that Mahomed, though a great impostor, had many followers; but they were obtained by fire, and sword, and blood. The apostles had no power but that of God, and they used no means but such as were worthy of God. They were men of strict integrity, of deep piety, and of unwearied diligence; and heaven crowned all their labours with success.

II. CHRIST IS BECOME THE FIRST-FRUTTS OF THEM THAT SLEPT.

The resurrection is compared to *a harvest*. The bodies of men, like seed in the earth, are laid in the grave; and as sure as the seed quickens and grows, so surely shall they be quickened and raised up. The growth of the seed is natural; but the resurrection of the dead will be supernatural. Omnipotence is necessary in both cases; and it is certain that omnipotent power can raise the dead with as much ease as it can produce a grain of corn.

Christ is *the first-fruits*. Many, indeed, were raised from the dead before he arose; but they died again. They were raised to mortality; but he was the first who rose to immortality. Death had no more power over him, being vanquished and overcome by his resurrection.

The first-fruits being *a pledge* of the general harvest, the resurrection of Christ is *a pledge* of ours. As sure as he rose, so surely shall we arise ; *but every man in his own order* : *Christ the first-fruits ; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming.* 1 Cor. xv. 23.

Let us commemorate the resurrection of Christ with songs of praise. The truths of christianity are established—death and the grave are conquered—and the resurrection of the dead is certain. Let us rise from a grave of sin ; let us gain a vital union with Christ ; and, when he shall descend from heaven, in the glory of his Father, may we rise from the dead, and **meet** him in the air ! *Amen.*

THE
DAY of PENTECOST.

SERMON XLIV.

ACTS ii. 1—4.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the were all with one accord in one place: and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting: and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

JOHN baptized with water unto repentance; but Jesus baptized with the Holy Ghost and

fire. All the disciples were baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire on the day of Pentecost. While they were assembled with one accord, in one place, the Spirit of God came down from heaven, *as a mighty rushing wind, and filled the house where they were sitting: and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.*

Let us make a few general observations upon this interesting passage.

I. WHEN THE DAY OF PENTECOST WAS FULLY COME, THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS WERE ALL WITH ONE ACCORD IN ONE PLACE.

The *Pentecost* was a jewish festival, kept to commemorate the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai; and it was observed fifty days after the *Passover*. Christ had suffered at the *Passover*; but was glorified at the *Pentecost*. It was a dreadful day when the law was delivered on the mount that burned with fire; but it was a glorious day when the Holy Ghost, as tongues of fire, came down upon the apostles, to qualify them for the blessed work of preaching the gospel to all nations.

The church of Christ was then but a *little flock*. They were all in *one place*. There were,

indeed, many other followers of Jesus in different parts of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria ; but still the church was small. Jesus had laboured in the ministry both privately and publicly for the space of three years ; he had travelled from place to place ; had wrought mighty works amongst the people ; and yet, after all, how few were truly converted to God ! Let the faithful ministers of Christ, who see but little fruit of their labours, take encouragement ; for great success does not always attend even the best of ministrations.

The followers of Jesus were few in number, but they were all of *one accord*. They had one faith, and one hope. They loved Jesus, and they loved one another. Happy would it have been if the church had continued in this spirit. The spirit of religious unity brings down the Spirit of God ; but jars and contentions cause him to depart.

II. AND SUDDENLY THERE CAME A SOUND FROM HEAVEN AS OF A MIGHTY RUSHING WIND, AND FILLED THE HOUSE WHERE THEY WERE SITTING.

Let us never forget that all our blessings *come from heaven*. The prayers of the disciples were directed to heaven ; and from thence the Spirit came down. *Every good and every*

perfect gift, cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. James i. 17. Jesus was gone up into heaven to intercede for man ; and the gift of the Spirit was the first blessing which he sent down.

Blessings sometimes come *suddenly*. We may have waited long in the way of duty ; we may have been ready to conclude that the blessing for which we waited would never come ; but in a moment, when on the borders of despair, our souls have been satisfied with good things. Let this encourage us to persevere in duty ; for the promise is sure. Let us be prepared every moment for the reception of necessary gifts ; still patiently waiting for the happy moment when God may see fit to bless our waiting souls.

The Spirit of God came as a *mighty rushing wind*. The operations of this Divine Spirit are various. Sometimes they are as a rushing wind which carries all before it ; but more frequently like a gentle breeze, and a still small voice. The Spirit came at that time as a rushing wind to point out the *force* and *energy* of gospel truth, which was accompanied with such amazing power, that in a short time many nations became

obedient to the faith. But the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost are of the gentle kind. Nevertheless, let us thankfully submit to his influences whether they be like a torrent or a gentle stream. Let us not dare to direct God in the mode of his operations. He knows the various tempers and situations of men, and what methods of his grace are the most likely to succeed: therefore, in whatever way he may see fit to work, let it be our constant care, not only to submit, but to co-work with him.

The *house* in which they were sitting was *filled*. Thus the principles of christianity fill the heart, and are intended to be spread over the whole world. Yea the time will come, when the influences of this Spirit shall be felt and enjoyed in every part of the habitable globe. When the seventh angel shall sound his trumpet, it will be said in heaven, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.* Rev. xi. 15.

III. AND THERE APPEARED CLOVEN TONGUES AS OF FIRE, AND IT SAT UPON EACH OF THEM.

The Spirit appeared in the form of *tongues*, because the apostles were to speak for their Lord; and he gave them a door of utterance.

May all our tongues be touched with hallowed fire, that we may speak for God ! While ministers speak publicly, let private christians speak privately ; every one endeavouring to propagate the doctrines, and to recommend the duties and privileges of pure christianity. Let us neither be afraid nor ashamed to speak in so good a cause.

The tongues were *cloven*. Sin introduced the confusion of tongues, but grace provided a remedy. The gift of tongues was necessary to enable the apostles to carry the gospel to nations of various languages. On this very day they spake to the people in various languages ; using and improving the gift as soon as it was given ; a lesson which we should learn, and constantly practice.

The tongues were like *fire*. The apostles were to speak with burning zeal ; and their words were to be like fire. But this also pointed out the purifying influences of the word. The Spirit, as a purifying flame, accompanies the word when it is faithfully delivered, so that it becomes a means of sanctification. Christ said to the disciples, *Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you* ; and he

put up the following prayer for them to the Father : *Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth.* John xvii. 17.

The fiery tongues sat upon *each of them*. The whole assembly, men and women, were baptized with the Holy Ghost. All may speak in the name of the Lord. Women, who are not allowed to speak in the church, may exercise their gifts in a more private way. They may instruct children, servants, and friends ; and thereby promote the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom.

IV. AND THEY ALL WERE FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST, AND BEGAN TO SPEAK AS THE SPIRIT GAVE THEM UTTERANCE.

The disciples were *filled* with the Holy Ghost. The fiery tongues sat upon them ; and the Holy Ghost entered and filled their hearts. Outward gifts are but of little use without the inward operations of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were filled with miraculous gifts, which are not now to be expected ; but all the true followers of Jesus are *now* filled with the graces of the Spirit. The Spirit came down to abide with the church : and his blessed operations are constantly suited to the varying cases and circumstances of the church and the world. Every

man has that kind and degree of the Spirit's influence which is necessary both for his own salvation, and for that usefulness amongst mankind to which he may be called." This remark will help us to form a right judgment of the various gifts of the Spirit by which men have been influenced in different ages of the world.

They all began to *speak* as the Spirit gave them *utterance*. No man should dare to speak for Christ without the Spirit of Christ. Let ministers, whether they speak extempore, by notes, or written discourses, attend to this remark. Do they not all profess to be *moved* by the *Holy Ghost* to take upon them the sacred office of the ministry? This is not a novel doctrine, introduced and palmed upon the credulous, by enthusiastic preachers. Our *pious* reformers thought it necessary; and our *rational* divines even now profess it at their ordination. We contend not for miraculous gifts. They were necessary in the apostolic age, and, for ought we know, they may be necessary in some future age; but they are not necessary now. We contend for the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, which are absolutely necessary at this day. Those sermons which are composed and delivered under the influences of the *Holy Ghost*, are made the greatest blessing to the people.

The gift of the Spirit demands our warmest gratitude. At this very time we enjoy the blessed effects of that heavenly effusion. Had the Spirit been withheld; the prophecies would have failed, and infant christianity would have perished. The truths which enlighten our dark world would have been buried in oblivion; and every thing that is lovely and excellent amongst men would soon have disappeared. O let us bless God for that glorious day; and while we bring it to remembrance, let us devoutly pray for those divine influences which are necessary to salvation!

The festival of *Whitsuntide* was observed by the primitive church with peculiar solemnity; and, indeed, it is a season in which we should call to mind not only the absolute necessity of holiness, but the means of acquiring it. All the means which we use to attain a conformity to the divine image, must be accompanied with the influences of the Holy Spirit, or they will prove ineffectual.—May this blessed Spirit abide in our churches, fill our hearts, and direct our steps to the heavenly Jerusalem! There may we ever adore the supreme Being, whose Son redeemed us from death, and whose Spirit prepares and makes us meet for the mansions of the blessed! *Amen.*

THE
BREVITY of HUMAN LIFE.

.....
SERMON XLV.
.....

PSAL. xc. 10.

The days of our years are threescore years and ten: and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

IT has been maintained by some that the *exact* period of human life is *absolutely fixed*; but we cannot reconcile this opinion either with scripture or reason. *Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.* Psal. lv. 23. Do we not see many proofs of this? Are there not thousands amongst the dead, who might now

have been amongst the living, had they been wise and prudent? Some hasten death by gluttony, drunkenness, and debauchery: others are cut off, by the arm of justice, for their crimes: and others destroy themselves by poison, hemp, and steel. Can we suppose that the exact moment of their death was fixed, without the horrid supposition, that he who fixed the end, fixed also the fatal means? This supposition would make God the author of sin. There is, indeed, an appointed time for man upon earth, which is well expressed in our text: *The days of our years are threescore years and ten*: This is the common period of human life. We may die sooner, or live a little longer. By reason of strength, or a vigorous constitution, we may live fourscore years; but then it is *labour and sorrow*; for *it is soon cut off, and we fly away*.

Here we have two important truths: the period of human life is short; and, if we exceed that period, it is labour and sorrow.

I. THE PERIOD OF HUMAN LIFE IS SHORT.

Passing over the thousands and millions who die in infancy, in youth, and in the bloom of life, we may say of all who attain the full age of man, that their life is *a vapour that appeareth for a*

little time, and then vanisheth away. James iv. 14. It may fitly be compared to a post, a shadow, a flower, a flood, a dream, and a tale that is told.

Our life appears short when compared with the lives of the *antediluvians*. They lived many hundred years. *All the days of Methuselah were nine hundred, sixty and nine years: and he died.* Gen. v. 27. They were but children at three-score years and ten; but, when we attain that age, infirmities crowd upon us, and death is close behind. What an amazing abridgment of human life! Who can account for it upon natural principles? Their longevity might be occasioned by the regularity of the seasons, the fertility of the earth, the strength of their constitutions, or their particular manner of living; but the best way to account for it, is to ascribe it to the will of that God in whom *we live, and move, and have our being.* Acts xvii. 28. He saw fit to prolong their lives, and he has seen fit to cut ours short. In both cases, no doubt, his conduct has been guided by wisdom and goodness. O let us seriously lay it to heart, lest death should cut us off before the work of life be done.

The period of human life appears shorter still

when compared with the duration of the *world*. It is near six thousand years since the world was created. What a vast number of generations have passed away since then! *One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth.* Eccles. i. 4. The generations from Abraham to David were fourteen; from David to the Babylonish captivity were fourteen; and from that period to the coming of Christ, there were fourteen generations. “When we (says Doddridge) survey such a series of generations, it is obvious to reflect, how like the leaves of a tree, one passeth away, and another cometh. Of those who formerly lived upon the earth, and perhaps made the most conspicuous figure among the children of men, how many have there been, whose names are perished with them, and how many of whom nothing but their names are remaining! Thus are we passing away, and thus shall we shortly be forgotten. Happy, if while we are forgotten of men, we are remembered by God, and our names are found written in the book of life!”

When compared with *eternity*, our lives dwindle to a point. Those who entered upon eternity several thousand years ago, are but now upon the borders of endless duration;

and when thousands and millions of ages are gone, they will be exactly in the same situation. What a great subject for the little mind of man to contemplate! Endless duration confounds our thought. We may look at it till, like a man who looks down a tremendous precipice, we turn giddy. If we stretch our thought as far as it can reach, eternity is before us still. If this globe, on which we live, were composed of small grains of sand, one of which should be removed every million of ages, the period would arrive when the last grain would be taken away; but even then eternity would be but just beginning! What, then, is mortal life? What are threescore years and ten? How soon they are gone! They are lost in this vast comparison. No wonder that the inspired writers, who were in the habit of contemplating endless duration, should compare this fleeting life to things of the shortest continuance. *Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee.* Psal. xxxix. 5. This is a subject which every man should deeply ponder in his heart, that he may learn those lessons of wisdom which are necessary for him as the creature of a day.

II. IF WE EXCEED THAT PERIOD, IT IS LABOUR AND SORROW.

Most men desire old age ; but few reflect upon the labour and sorrow of the aged. Let us venture to look at this gloomy subject : perhaps it may check our youthful vanity, and lead us to a serious, sober conduct.

The aged have lost the *vigour* and *strength* of youth. *The grasshopper is a burden.* They can scarcely move from place to place ; and a little exertion, out of the common way, quite overcomes them. In youth, a long journey and laborious exercise was deemed nothing ; but now *they are afraid of that which is high.* Every little rising ground is an object of fear, because it requires a painful exertion of their feeble powers. They lean upon a staff, and are glad to rest their weary limbs,

The *intellects* and *senses* of the aged are *decayed* ; so that they neither understand nor relish life as they formerly did. They are dull of apprehension ; their memory is weak ; their sight is dim ; their ears are heavy ; their food is not sweet to the taste ; their sleep is not refreshing ; and, in short, both body and mind are in a state of ruin.

Old people have lost those friends and com-

panions of their youth, who often sweetened the bitter cup of life, and they feel but little inclination to form new friendships, as they neither love others, nor are beloved themselves, as in the days of youth. The idea of out-living our dearest friends, so as to become solitary in the midst of society, is very distressing ; and it would be completely insupportable to the aged, if they were susceptible of those fine feelings of friendship which they felt in former years. Blunted as these feelings are, this no doubt is a source of considerable sorrow. We often hear them praise the dead whom they loved, and when this is the subject of conversation, we are pained with their sighs and groans.

When people are far advanced in life, their death is sometimes *desired*, even by those whom they have loved and served for a long succession of years. Are they rich ? Their death is desired on that account. Children and heirs, longing for their wealth, wish to see their heads laid low. Are they poor ? Their death is desired on account of the trouble which they give, and the support which they receive. In either case, they are too frequently in the way of the young. This must cause them many a bitter reflection. It is a source of sorrow which they never ex-

perienced before, and which they scarcely know how to bear.

Their prospects in the world are nearly closed. In youth their prospects were continually rising, and almost every day produced new hopes; but having attained the full age of man, they have but little hope of any thing below the sun. They have been on the mountain-top of life, where they had extensive and delightful prospects; but now they are in a deep vale, where they must sink into the cold arms of death, and make the grave their bed. Death stares them full in the face, and a vast eternity is in view.

We may add, that too many at this awful period, *are totally unprepared for a better world.* Their sins are unrepented of, and unforgiven; their hearts are hard; their tempers sour, peevish, and fretful; and they are a perpetual plague both to themselves and to all with whom they have to do. Blessed be God, there are a few whose situation is quite the reverse. Their sins are pardoned; their souls are cleansed; they sweetly resign themselves to the will of God, and look forward with pleasing hope to a better life. Happy is he, who in these days of sorrow, can say with the Psalmist, *My flesh*

and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Psal. lxxiii. 26.

Most men complain of the shortness of life; but few improve it as it flies. Short as it is, it is long enough for every necessary purpose. Good men should rejoice that it is no longer. Heaven is their home, and they will soon be there. If wicked men were to live longer, they might do more mischief, increase their guilt, and add to the punishments which await them in a future state. Come, then, let us be up and doing. Time is of infinite value. Let us improve every moment as it flies. While others indulge anxious desires to live *long*, let it be our principle care to live *well*; and then we shall be happy beyond the grave.

THE
CERTAINTY of DEATH.

.....
SERMON XLVI.
.....

ECCLES. ix. 5.

For the living know that they shall die.

LIFE is but a short journey from the cradle to the tomb; and death, with its awful solemnities, must soon be experienced by men of all nations. We are ignorant of many other things; but no man is ignorant of his mortality: *For the living know that they shall die.*

We shall consider three things in this discourse: first, what is implied in dying; second-

ly, how the living know that they shall die; and, thirdly, what improvement should be made of this awful subject.

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN DYING?

The question is bold, and cannot be fully answered; for the living have not experienced it, and the dead do not reveal the profound secret. Some suppose that it implies an utter extinction of being; but they neither regard the dictates of reason, nor the discoveries of revelation, both of which proclaim the soul of man immortal. The following things are generally allowed to be implied in dying: a separation of soul and body; a final departure out of this world; and an entrance upon a new state of existence.

Death implies *a separation of soul and body*. Man is a compound being, of body and soul, of matter and spirit. His body is of the dust; his soul is from God. These are mysteriously united; but death dissolves the union, and breaks the unknown tie. *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.* Eccles. xii. 7. This separation is awful to a good man. Frail nature shrinks at the prospect! What, then, must it be to a bad man? In his calm and sober moments

he views it with horror ; but, inflamed by diabolical passions, he rushes into it as the frantic horse into the battle. We can form but very imperfect ideas of the *pain* which may attend our dissolution. Some appear to suffer much. Nature is convulsed with dreadful agonies. Others go quietly away, like the dying taper, or the ripe fruit which gently drops from the parent tree. But this must be left to God, who will order the circumstances of our death in such a way as shall be most for our good and his glory.

Another thing implied in death is *a final departure out of this world*. *Here we have no continuing city.* Heb. xiii. 14. We are *strangers*, who appeared but lately ; and *pilgrims*, who are hastening away. Death ends our journey ; and we leave all behind, to return no more. The husband leaves his wife ; the parent his children ; the master his servants ; the minister his people ; the general his army ; and the monarch his throne. In that awful moment every thing earthly is given up for ever ! Houses and land, gold and silver, honours and titles, are left behind. The pleasure-taker leaves his pleasures ; the drunkard quits his cup ; the poor and afflicted leave poverty and affliction ; and the pi-

ous are taken from their friends, and from all the lovely means of grace. *Man dieth and wasteth away ; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ?* Job xiv. 10. He is not to be found. No eye will ever see him again upon earth. His place will be vacant, and his possessions occupied by others. We hear no more of the dead. Their names are blotted out, and their memory is soon forgotten. *As for man, his days are as grass : as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone ; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* Psal. ciii. 15, 16. The glory of man fades ; his greatness declines ; and he sinks into the silent grave ! O that the living would lay it to heart ; and feel the vast importance of a thorough preparation for a better world !

The last thing implied in death is *an entrance upon a new state of existence.* Man, as a compound being, is nearly allied both to the visible world and the invisible ; and the moment he quits his tenement of clay, having done with the visible and material world, he enters into the invisible world of spirits, and mixes either with devils and the damned, or with angels and the saints. How we shall exist in that unknown world is a deep secret. When we think upon

it, we are lost in wonder. *Here* we see objects through the medium of the eye: we hear sounds through the medium of the ear: we speak with our tongues: we have feet to walk, and hands to handle. *There* we shall exist without a body; and how we shall either see or hear, taste or smell, speak or feel, or move, will never be discovered on this side the grave. We must die to know. One thing we know, and it is the only thing with which we are concerned, namely, that we shall be either happy or miserable. Our state will be fixed and unalterable; for there is no probation in eternity. There it will be said, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.* Rev. xxii. 11.

II. HOW DO THE LIVING KNOW THAT THEY SHALL DIE?

The living know, *by the appointment of God*, that they shall die. The word of truth informs us, that *It is appointed unto men once to die.* Heb. ix. 27. The time when, and the manner how, is uncertain; but nothing is more certain than death itself. Our first parents, presuming to eat forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, brought death both upon themselves and their

posterity. *By man came death—and in Adam all die.* 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. Whatever God appoints is right; for, such is the rectitude of his nature, that he cannot do wrong. When men do wrong, it is owing either to ignorance or wickedness; but God is both infinitely wise and infinitely good. On this ground, we may view death as a wise, just, and necessary appointment: and an appointment which must take place. Man can neither evade it by cunning, nor overcome it by force. *All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto the dust.* Job xxxiv. 15.

The *death of others* is a proof that we must die. Men are dying daily and hourly. Perhaps there is not a moment in which some are not passing out of time into eternity. While I am writing, while thou art reading, it is probable that many are struggling with death. We cannot, then, escape the cruel monster. If we flee, he will pursue his prey, and seize us in an hour unknown. We seldom live a day without hearing of some one who has fallen a victim to this destroyer. Our relations, friends, and foes, are swept away. What a proof of our mortality! Death will soon find us out, and hurry us away. This hour may be our last. This mo-

ment may put a final period to our present life.

We know we shall die *by what we feel in ourselves*. Life is progressive, and we pass rapidly from one state to another. Some have already passed through infancy and youth ; others have left the bloom of life ; and others have entered upon old age. We never return to these states again ; but still press on towards the grave. Every pain we feel, every degree of weariness and weakness, proclaims the approach of death. What is our loss of sight, of hearing, of agility and strength, but certain notices of approaching dissolution ?

III. WHAT IMPROVEMENT SHOULD WE MAKE OF THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT ?

We should *sit loose to the world*. While we pursue the various duties of life, let us guard against an immoderate attachment to men and things. Why should those things engross our affections which we cannot hold ? These fond attachments render death far more painful than otherwise it would be. A carnal man is torn away by violence from all he holds most dear ; but he that is spiritual dies with pleasing hope, and hastens to a world of joy, where all his treasures are, and where his heart has been.

Let us carefully *improve the various scenes of life* through which we pass. Human life is chequered with strange and unaccountable varieties. Sometimes our days are crowned with health and strength, with wealth and friends: at other times clouds and darkness gather round us; and we sink into poverty, sickness, and disgrace. Each of these states may be improved, to some valuable purpose. In prosperity we may learn the lessons of gratitude, humility, and obedience to the will of heaven; and in adversity we may learn the lessons of patience, resignation, and contentment. Thus, when we come to reflect, in the hour of death, upon our conduct in life, we shall have to bless God for that grace which enabled us to do his blessed will.

Our sins should die before us, lest they sink us lower than the grave. Death destroys the body; but it cannot destroy sin. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* 1 John iii. 8. Let us turn to him by repentance and faith, that he may become our *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* 1 Cor. i. 30. Then we shall gain a complete victory over sin and death. *The sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law.* But thanks be to God,

which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

Let us earnestly seek that spiritual life which cannot be destroyed by death. That man who is spiritually alive, may look at death with boldness, and bid defiance to its utmost rage. He has nothing to fear. God is with him. Angels wait to conduct him to the regions of immortality. And even his perishing body will rise again to die no more.

THE

RESURRECTION of the DEAD.

.....
SERMON XLVII.
.....

ACTS xxiv. 15.

There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

THE words of our text are a part of the apostle Paul's defence before Felix, a Roman governor, when he was accused by Tertullus, the orator, as a *pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.* He confessed that after the way which they called heresy, (*a sect*) so he worshipped the God of his fathers, believing all things written in the law and the prophets; and that he had hope to-

wards God, which even his enemies allowed, that there should be *a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*

Let us first attempt to prove a general resurrection; and, secondly, answer some objections.

I. THERE WILL BE A GENERAL RESURRECTION.

Unassisted reason may deem a resurrection impossible; but God, who knows all things, has clearly revealed it in the holy scriptures. Our arguments in favour of that event must, therefore, be drawn from that infallible source; and if we can prove it to be a doctrine of revelation, we are bound to believe it, whatever difficulties attend the subject. Many things are asserted in the scriptures which cannot be explained, because they far exceed human capacity. God reveals facts to the inhabitants of this world; perhaps in a future world he may condescend to reveal circumstances, and the manner and reason of things.

Intimations of a general resurrection have been given in the resurrection of *individuals*. Without multiplying instances, we shall only mention the following: Elijah, a famous pro-

phet in Israel, raised the widow's son. He cried unto the Lord, *and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.* 1 Kings xvii. 22. Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, raised Lazarus from the dead, after he had been buried four days. After the resurrection of Jesus, *The graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves—and went into the holy city, and appeared to many.* Matt. xxvii. 52, 53. Under this head we may also mention Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, which, though immediately referring to the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, may be considered as a striking intimation of a general resurrection. When he prophesied, at the command of God, *The bones came together, bone to his bone—the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them from above—breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.* Ezek. xxxvii. 7, 8, 10.

The resurrection of *our Lord* affords an undeniable proof of a general resurrection. The apostle Paul urged this argument to the Corinthians: *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there*

is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. 1 Cor. xv. 12, 13. There is such a connection between his resurrection, and the resurrection of the dead, that he who denies the one must deny the other. *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* 1 Cor. xv. 22. He rose from the dead by his own power. *I lay down my life (said he) that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.* John x. 17, 18. Hence we may reasonably infer that he has power over death and the grave. Had death conquered him, it would have conquered all the human race; but he has the dominion; nor is there any power either in death or the grave that can withstand him.—Let us rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord, and let us cast away our gloomy fears of death and the grave! The grave may detain us a while; but Jesus will come and set us free.

The general resurrection is *positively asserted* in a vast number of passages, both in the Old Testament and in the New. Daniel, by the spirit of prophecy, foretold the resurrection of the dead. His words are as clear and express as words can be: *Many of them that sleep in*

the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Dan. xii. 2. Our Saviour expresses the same thing in clear and appropriate language: *Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good unto a resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to a resurrection of damnation.* John v. 28, 29. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians expressly upon this subject; and nothing can be more satisfactory than his account of the resurrection. He says, *The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.* 1 Cor. xv. 52. John, in the apocalyptic vision, *saw the dead small and great stand before God—and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.* Rev. xx. 12, 13.

From these passages, and many others which might be quoted, it is evident that we must either admit of a general resurrection, or give up the authority of the Bible. Many objections may be raised against this important doctrine; nor, indeed, is there any other doctrine against which the *wit* and *wickedness* of man may not raise objections. The following is a striking

proof of this: Dr. B—y was of opinion that there is no matter in the universe, and consequently that man has no body. Dr. P—y thought there was nothing but matter, and consequently that there is no immortal spirit in man. Between them, they robbed man both of his body and his soul. Had those two great men placed *less dependence* upon their intellectual powers, and *more* upon *the sure word of prophecy*, the world would not have been troubled with the painful and dangerous disputes which they set on foot.

II. ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE RESURRECTION.

The principal objections against the resurrection, may be reduced to two: Some think it unnecessary—And others impossible.

Those who deem a resurrection *unnecessary*, contend, that as separate spirits can live without the body, it is totally unnecessary to raise it up again: and that it is not necessary even on the plan of rewards and punishments, as men may be either rewarded or punished without the body. Suppose we admit this, it does not follow, either that that kind of existence can be continued, which evidently was designed for man from

the beginning, or that he can be rewarded or punished in a suitable way without a body. The creatures of God are innumerable, and each kind has a peculiar state in which its being admits of perfection. A separate state must ever be a very imperfect state to man. The soul of man is peculiarly fitted for a material body, through the medium of which, God will both punish the wicked, and reward the righteous. An union of soul and body in a state of purity, will be the perfection of man in heaven ; nor can the sad effects of sin be done away without such an union. The resurrection of bad men will render them far more capable of suffering *the vengeance of eternal fire*, than they can be in a separate state ; and on that account the resurrection will prove to them a dreadful event.

If we maintain the opinion that the resurrection of the dead is *unnecessary*, we shall be forced to explain away the obvious meaning of the holy scriptures ; like Hymenius, who said the resurrection was past, and thereby destroyed the faith of some. The scriptures, by artful criticism, may be made to mean any thing, and every thing, that designing men may please ; and there can be no certainty in them, if they

are not, like other writings, to be understood in their plain grammatical sense.

The resurrection of the dead would appear not only *unnecessary* but even *alarming*, if the bodies of men were to be raised with all their present imperfections ; but when that glorious event shall take place, our bodies will undergo a great change, whereby they will be fitted for that world in which we shall live for ever. The apostle Paul describes the resurrection-body of the saints under four heads. It will be *incorruptible* ; no more subject to decay or dissolution : it will be *glorious* ; free from all defect, deformity, and dishonour : it will be *strong* to enjoy and to do the will of God : and it will be *spiritual* ; refined and pure, light and agile. The resurrection-body of the wicked will be incorruptible, and strong ; but cannot be arrayed with glory.

Some think the resurrection of the dead *impossible*. It must be allowed on all hands that the difficulties are great, especially if we insist upon the resurrection of the same body. The materials of which our bodies are formed, are in a perpetual state of change even in this life ; and after death these materials may undergo in-

numerable changes. But every difficulty on this head vanishes, when we consider the wisdom, power, and promise of God. He knows how to collect the scattered particles ; and his power is omnipotent. Surely it will not be harder to raise the dead than to create a world out of nothing ! Hard and easy are things belonging to us ; but every thing, which does not imply a contradiction, is easy with God.

Lastly : We are not only assured that there will be a resurrection, but that it will be sudden and awful even to saints ; but to sinners it will be dreadful beyond description. It is probable that every one will have the same features which he had in this life, by which he will be known to be the same identical person. But, O what a change ! Some shining in all the glories of the Redeemer, and others covered with shame and confusion. May we, who are now in a state of probation, make it our great concern to live and die in Christ, that we may, with him, rise to glory and immortality. *Amen.*

THE
GENERAL JUDGMENT.

SERMON XLVIII.

REV. XX. 12.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

THE book of Revelations is the only prophetical book of the New Testament. John, the beloved disciple of our Lord, was banished, by the Emperor Domitian, into the *Isle of Patmos*, where, in several prophetic visions, he had a re-

presentation of all the great events which should happen from his time, to the time when the saints shall be finally settled in the *New Jerusalem*.

In this passage we have three things: The dead, small and great, stand before God—the books are opened—and the dead are judged out of those things written in the books, according to their works.

I. THE DEAD, SMALL AND GREAT, STAND BEFORE GOD.

By *the dead, small and great*, we are to understand the whole of the human race. What a vast assembly! Men of all nations, of all ages, and of all conditions, make up this great multitude. There was never any thing like it before, and there will never be any thing like it again. Dean Prideaux tells us that the forces of Xerxes, when he invaded Greece, amounted to two millions, six hundred and forty one thousand, six hundred and ten men; besides eunuchs, women, sutlers, and other people who followed his camp, amounting to as many more. So that the whole number of persons that followed Xerxes in that expedition, were at least *five millions*. But those were a mere hand-

ful, compared with the dead, who will stand before God in that great day: Who can number them? He only who numbers the sands of the sea, and the stars of the firmament.

It is awful to stand before an earthly judge, though but a mere man; but how much more awful to stand before the heavenly Judge, who is both God and man! Human judges may err; but the Judge of quick and dead cannot. They only know a part; but he knows all things. They may be bribed to do wrong; but God, the Judge, is essentially just. *He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.* Deut. xxxii. 4.

Could we enter into the feelings of that day, how trifling and insignificant would all the affairs of this lower world appear! The righteous will stand firm, erect, and joyful, before the Judge; but the wicked will stand trembling, hanging down their heads, and filled with the most terrifying apprehensions! We now turn from the assembly to the books:

II. THE BOOKS ARE OPENED.

Books are kept to preserve a knowledge of

past events. God has no need of such records; but, to represent the *equity* of his proceedings, the subject is set forth in this way. The books which will be opened in the day of judgment are of two kinds, general and special. Let us consider each:

The *general books* will be various. Without indulging fanciful and imaginary notions, we may suppose the following books will be opened: *The book of God's conduct towards men*, including creation, providence, redemption, and grace; which book will fully vindicate the character, and display the glory of the eternal God. His wisdom, power, justice, mercy, and truth, will appear in shining characters, to the comfort of his friends, and the confusion of his enemies. All must then see that his way has been perfect, and that he never did, nor ever could do wrong. A second book to be opened will contain *the various laws, or rules of conduct, which God has given to men*, under every dispensation. It will contain the law which has been written in the hearts of men—the law of Moses, and the law of Christ. When this book shall be opened, it will discover what men should have *been*, and what they should have *done* in every situation. This book will plainly shew the equity of God,

who never required of men more than he gave them power to perform; but who wisely and graciously suited duties to privileges; so that where much was given, much was required; and where little was given, little was required. A third book will *unfold human conduct*. The omniscience of God, which records every work, will exhibit a complete and universal history of man. These records will be large, but plain and intelligible; so that he who could not read before, will now both read and understand.

The *special book* to be opened in that day, is called, *The book of life*. It contains a list of all God's people. They are enrolled in it when they begin to live to God. The dead in sin are not, nor can be written in this book. The living only are registered there, and their names being found in that sacred volume, in the last day, they will live for ever. Those who fall into sin, and become twice dead, are blotted out; but he who steadily perseveres in the christian warfare, and overcomes all his enemies, *the same shall be clothed in white raiment: and I will not*, says Jesus, *blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father, and before his angels*. Rev. iii. 5. After the opening of the books, the awful judgment begins.

III. THE DEAD ARE JUDGED OUT OF THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS.

Every individual must be examined, and receive a final sentence. There will be no unconcerned spectator. Each one, in that great congregation, will have a deep interest in the solemnities of the day. The Judge will examine every one in the presence of the whole assembly. Angels, men, and devils, will hear our trial. Our whole life, private and public, will be brought to light. The deepest secrets of our souls will be laid open. Not a thought, a desire, or a design, will escape the notice of the Judge. Every temper, every work, and every word, will be brought forward. *For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Eccles. xii. 14.

The dead will be judged *out of those things, which are written in the books.* One man will not be allowed to accuse another. Devils will not be allowed to accuse men. Nothing but written records will be produced as evidence, either for or against any one. The books, like him who wrote them, will be faithful and true

They will contain full and sufficient evidence to determine the everlasting fate of all ; and the evidence will be so full and clear, that no doubt can remain. Devils and wicked men will be silenced, and the saints will triumphantly shout, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.* Psal. cxix. 137.

The dead will be judged *according to their works.* Not according to their professions, opinions, privileges, riches, poverty, rank, or titles, in this lower world. We are justified by *faith*, in this day of grace ; but in the day of judgment we shall either be justified or condemned by the evidence of our *works.* Works are either good or bad. Amongst the good, we may reckon works of justice, mercy, and piety : amongst the bad, we may reckon works of vanity, dishonesty, cruelty, uncleanness, drunkenness, and prophaneness. All these will appear on our examination, and by them our state will be fixed. At the same time the principles which produced these works, and the ends to which they were directed, will be taken into the account. How dreadful to be *weighed in the balances and found wanting !* Dan. v. 27. To prevent that, let us seek an union with Jesus, which, leading to a renewal of our hearts,

will enable us to bring forth those fruits of righteousness which God will reward in that day.

It will certainly appear, when the books are opened, that Christ is the *only Saviour* of a lost and ruined world ; and that all men, had they followed the light which he afforded, and the grace by which he influenced their hearts, might have been saved eternally. Those who have only the law written on their hearts, may find their way to the right hand of the Judge. And shall we, who are highly favoured with the word of God, and who abound with christian privileges, be found with horror on the left ?

That day will put a final period to all fraud, oppression, and injustice. The triumphs of the wicked, and the sufferings of the righteous, will then come to an end. A just sentence will be pronounced, and every one will enter upon that state in which he must remain for ever.

Amidst the hurry and tumult of this depraved world, let us often think of that great day. When we are disposed to take our fill of pleasure, and to walk in the way of our own hearts, let us recollect, that for all these things God

will bring us into judgment. O how shall we appear then ! What will be our lot? Must we stand with devils and the damned to hear our sentence ? Or shall we be found with saints and angels ? What is our state now ? Let us now bring ourselves into judgment ! Let conscience speak, and be attentive to its voice ! Does conscience condemn ? Then, go to a merciful God through Christ. Seek, diligently, the remission of sins. Enter into the fountain which is set open for sin and uncleanness. Thus, when the Judge descends, in all the glory of his father, we shall appear before him with joy and gladness. *Amen.*

SINNERS BANISHED FROM CHRIST.

SERMON XLIX.

MATT. xxv. 41.

*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,
prepared for the devil and his angels,*

HOW awful are these words ! The bare repetition of them is enough to make the stoutest sinner tremble ! They contain the final *sentence*, which the Judge of all the earth will pronounce upon the wicked in the day of judgment. The sentence contains four parts : The wicked are banished from Christ—they are banished with a curse—they are banished into that fire which

was prepared for the devil and his angels—and their banishment will be everlasting.

I. THE WICKED ARE BANISHED FROM CHRIST.

The sentence opens with the word *depart*. While those wretched beings, who are commanded to *depart*, lived in a state of probation, Christ often invited them to himself, and complained that they would not come to him. But, what a sad change of circumstances! Now he frowns, and says, *Depart!* They are not fit to remain in his glorious presence. Sin has made them contemptible, and the righteous Judge beholds them with contempt. Entreaties to remain with him would now be vain. There was a time when they might have been heard with kind attention; but that time is past and gone for ever. Henceforth, should they pray, their prayers will never reach the throne of God.

They depart from *Christ*, the HOLY ONE OF GOD, who lived and died for sinful man. In departing from him, they depart from all his blessed followers. On earth they mixed with the wise and good, and many blessings which they then enjoyed, were owing to that happy circumstance; but now the chaff is separated

from the wheat, and must be burned up with unquenchable fire. Perhaps they have relations, and acquaintance, at the right-hand of the Judge; but they must depart and never see them more to all eternity. This is not all: for in departing from Christ, they depart from all the joys and glories of heaven. Their eyes shall never behold those happy plains of light, where God will reign with saints and angels. O what a loss! The loss of ten thousand worlds, were we in possession of them all, would be a trifle to the loss of Christ and heaven!

II. THEY ARE BANISHED WITH A CURSE.

A *curse* stands directly opposed to a blessing: the one is followed by a communication of *good*, and the other by an infliction of *evil*. When God curses men, real evil is intended, and will unavoidably fall down upon them. Impotent men may call down *mischief*, and wish *evil*, and no evil may follow their daring imprecations; but the curses of God should be regarded in the most solemn manner, because they will be followed with suitable vengeance. How awful, then, are the curses of heaven! When the ground was cursed for the sin of man, it brought forth briars and thorns. When Cain was cursed he went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt

in the land of *Nod*, a Hebrew word, signifying a *wandering vagabond*, who trembles and shakes under a sense of guilt. Noah, under a divine impulse, cursed Canaan, and he became *vile* both in his own person, and in his posterity. Jesus cursed the fig-tree, and immediately it withered.

Wicked men are under a curse *now*; but mercy spares them. In the day of judgment, the curse will not only be pronounced, but fully executed. Banishment from Christ will be dreadful in itself; but banishment with a curse will be much more dreadful. Under his blessing, we may be happy any where; but under his curse, we can be happy no where. No doubt the curse of Christ will greatly increase the torment of the damned. They will reflect with grief upon his gracious undertakings for them; his repeated offers of mercy; his calls and warnings: and when they recollect that the last time they saw and heard him, he pronounced a curse upon them, we may suppose they will be filled with *extreme anguish*. Oh, cursed spirits, how can ye escape? Whither can ye flee from that vengeance which pursues you? Who can remove your curse, or deliver you from its direful effects? You have no friend in

the universe! There is no eye to pity—no hand to save!

III. THEY ARE BANISHED INTO THAT FIRE WHICH WAS PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS.

Angels, as well as men, were created to be happy; but those angels which kept not their first estate, were banished into hell. Hell was prepared for them at first; but guilty men, influenced, directed, and governed by the infernal powers, must share their punishment. O how dreadful to mix with devils, and to be confined with them in the same prison for ever!

Some have maintained that the fire of hell will be like the fire with which we are acquainted. The venerable Mr. Wesley says, 'Does not our Lord speak as if it were real fire! No one can deny or doubt this. Is it possible then to suppose that the God of truth would speak in this manner, if it were not so? Does he design to fright his poor creatures? What, with scarecrows? With vain shadows of things that have no being? O let not any think so! Impute not such folly to the Most High.'

Others suppose that the fire of hell is a
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strong *figure*, denoting extreme torment. Fire is that element which gives the greatest pain of any other ; and if the fire of hell should prove very different from our common fire, yet it must be allowed that it implies the infliction of inexpressible and inconceivable torment. Matthew Henry says, ‘This fire is the wrath of the eternal God, fastening upon the guilty souls and consciences of men that have made themselves fuel for it. Our God is a consuming fire, and sinners fall immediately into his hands.’

But it is of greater moment to *avoid* the fire of hell, than to determine the question about its nature and properties. Whether that fire be literal or figurative, it must be allowed to imply punishment, which far exceeds any thing that words can describe. It is probable that the damned will suffer throughout the whole man, and that every part, both of body and soul, will be tormented with dreadful misery. Nevertheless, as their punishment will be inflicted by the hand of impartial justice, we must suppose that some will suffer more than others. But who would run the dreadful risk of suffering the fire of hell in the smallest degree? The smallest degree of pain in those horrid regions, will be more acute than any sufferings in this life.

IV. THEY ARE BANISHED FOR EVER.

It is generally allowed that the joys of heaven will know no period; and the same word (*αιώνιον*) being used to express both the duration of those joys and the duration of torment in hell, we cannot suppose the one to come to an end, without supposing that the other may also end. He, therefore, who maintains that the word *everlasting* signifies no more than a limited period, though it be for *ages of ages*, shakes the foundation of eternal blessedness, destroys the best hopes of holy men, and throws a damp upon the glory of heaven. The word, we admit, is used for a limited time, when applied to many things in this world, because every thing merely relating to this visible world must pass away; but when applied to eternity, it always signifies *unlimited* duration.

The fact is, there will be no *saving remedy for the damned*. The scriptures invariably teach the impossibility of salvation without a Mediator. Christ *now* acts in that capacity, and is the Saviour of all who comply with the terms of mercy; but in the end of the world, he will give up his mediatorial kingdom, and God will be *all in all*. There is no intimation of his mediation for the damned. The moment in which the

sentence of final condemnation is passed upon them, they are abandoned to black despair. And who will plead their cause? Who will deliver them? When Christ gives them up, they are lost for ever.

Many have attempted to prove universal restoration, and the opinion gains ground; but it is built upon detached scraps of scripture, and far-fetched criticism. A plain man, guided by common sense, and an honest mind, would never find this doctrine in the book of God. It is as dangerous as it is false. It is dangerous, not only as it leads to *carelessness* about eternal things; but as it leads to a plan of interpreting the scriptures, which, if followed up, may end in the most serious consequences. Sound criticism will always be esteemed by judicious men; but the plan of criticism followed by these men, has a direct tendency to bring the scriptures into disgrace.

Let us often reflect upon this awful sentence. Those who are banished from Christ have lost the world, which was their god: they have lost all peace and joy: and their souls are lost. How dreadful is their lot! Banished from Christ; under a curse; tormented in fire; and no prospect of deliverance! They are filled with bitter re-

lections, plagued with horrid companions, and terrified with doleful prospects! And shall we, for a few fleeting and unsubstantial pleasures, plunge ourselves into endless misery? My dear friends, *be wise*. You are now warned—you are now entreated to accept of life and salvation. O delay not to accept the mercy of your God! Rejoice that your doom is not yet fixed, Bless God for his long forbearance. Renounce sin, and embrace Christ upon gospel terms. Give your hearts to God, and walk in his ways: then this awful sentence will never be pronounced upon you.

SAINTS INVITED to GLORY.

SERMON L.

MATT. xxv. 34.

Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

THE friends of Jesus will live and reign with him for ever. In this world a kingdom of grace is set up in their hearts ; and in the day of judgment they will be invited to a kingdom of glory. Who can describe the happiness of that moment, when the judge shall say to them, *Come ye blessed of my Father.*

Let us first examine the character of the persons invited to the kingdom; and, secondly, the purport of the invitation.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS INVITED TO THE KINGDOM.

In the preceding account they are called *sheep*. *He shall set the sheep on his right hand.* This is an appellation which the inspired writers frequently give to good men, on account of their harmless, meek, and inoffensive conduct. The marks by which they are known, are fully laid down in the following passage: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* John x. 27. The meaning is, they attend to his calls both inward and outward, and they follow him in the way of cheerful obedience. Those, therefore, who are deaf to his calls, and who disobey his commands, cannot belong to his flock, whatever professions they make, or whatever privileges they enjoy.

These sheep, in our text, are pronounced *blessed*. They are blessed in this life with a gracious call to repentance, faith, and salvation. When they *obey* the call, they are blessed with pardon, peace, and holiness; and, amidst all their afflictions and temptations, they can *say*—

by sweet experience, *Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways.* Psal. cxxviii. 1. That awful hour, so much dreaded by the wicked, is to them an hour of holy triumph; for they die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. They shall be blessed at the resurrection of the just with glorified bodies, and they shall be blessed in the great day with peculiar marks of divine approbation. Then the Judge will smile upon them, and heaven with all its glories, will open to their view:

The Father is the fountain of being and of *blessedness.* Every blessing which we receive through the mediation of Christ, must be ascribed to the Father's love; because he gave his Son to redeem, and his Spirit to renew our guilty and polluted souls. *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, through Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. v. 18. He pardons, accepts, and adopts, believers. In the day of judgment they will be *blessed* with peculiar tokens of his love. He will own them as his children before an assembled world, permit them to behold his glory, and grant them access to his throne.

II. THE PURPORT OF THE INVITATION.

The invitation implies three things: the saints are to remain with Christ—they are to inherit a kingdom—and the kingdom was prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

The saints are to *remain with Christ*. Seated upon the great white throne, and arrayed in the glory of his Father, he invites his church to come to him. The church, which is his bride, stands before him, and appears *a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*, Eph. v. 27. As a bridegroom, he presents her to himself, or places her in his presence, that he may survey her beauty. Marriage implies a peculiar union, and this strong *figure* is applied to Christ and his church, to express their everlasting union. The bride must dwell with her bridegroom, enjoy his presence, and share his glory. He is about to enter into his Father's kingdom, and to sit down on his throne; and his spouse must reign with him. When he was about to leave this world, he said to his disconsolate followers, *I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* John xiv. 3. Now he fulfils his faithful word, and gratifies the utmost wishes of his friends. The happiest moments

which they spent on earth, were those in which he favoured them with his presence in the means of grace. How delightful then must that world be, where they shall be with him perpetually!

They are invited to *inherit a kingdom*. A Kingdom implies three things: a King who governs, Subjects who are governed, and Laws by which they are governed.

The *King of heaven* is the Lord God omnipotent. The beloved John informs us in the book of Revelations, that he *heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings*, saying, *Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*. Rev. xix. 6. Earthly monarchs have reigned with *disputed titles*; but who will be found to dispute the title of the omnipotent Ruler of heaven? The enemies of his government will be put under his feet, and his friends will be exalted to his right-hand. Monarchs have reigned on earth, whose abilities were not sufficient to wield the sceptre; but heaven will be governed by unerring wisdom, Almighty power, and boundless goodness. The King of heaven is perfect, and his government

will be perfect; he is immortal, and his kingdom will be everlasting.

The *subjects* of the heavenly kingdom are *saints* and *angels*. The pious of all ages and nations will reside with the angels of God, as their fellow-subjects: But there will be no unpleasant distinction of nations, no unintelligible variety of languages, and no jarring sects. God is one, and all his subjects will be one. There may be various orders of angels, and various ranks of glorified human spirits. Some may be exalted far above others, on account of superior holiness, and as a reward of superior labours; but every one will be completely happy in his proper place, and every one will rejoice in the happiness of all the rest. The lowest will not view the highest with envy, nor will the highest look down upon the lowest with contempt. God, who is love, will be an everlasting centre of union to all his subjects; every one will be holy and happy, glorious and immortal. Every one will be full of joy; and every one will taste the most refined pleasures. *In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right-hand there are pleasures forevermore.* Psal. xvi. 11.

The *only law* of that glorious kingdom, is, **THE WILL OF GOD.** He is absolutely perfect,

and his will is a perfect law. Heaven will be an absolute monarchy, full of perfection and glory. It is fit that earthly monarchs should be limited, because they are imperfect ; but the eternal God should be under no control. He can will nothing but what is wise and good. Happy would it be for mortals if they would now obey his will. All the subjects of God in heaven obey the divine will cheerfully, constantly, and universally. One spirit inspires the whole. This being the case, heaven will be a place of perfect order, harmony, and love. How unlike the disorderly kingdoms of this world, where ten thousand various and contradictory principles cause perpetual confusion !

The saints are heirs of this kingdom, and Christ will put them into full possession. It is a possession which was purchased by his blood, and which is given to all who overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* Rev. xxi. 7.

The kingdom was *prepared* for them *from the foundation of the world*. Hence it appears evident, that God designed man for heaven when he created him at first; and had Adam

proved faithful when God placed him in a state of probation, it is probable he would have been translated to heaven without seeing death. His descendants might have been upon the same plan; each one might have been raised from earth to heaven, without passing through the vale of death.

It is said to the saints, *The kingdom prepared for you.* Are we, therefore, to infer that a certain number was elected to glory from the foundation of the world, and that the rest were reprobated to damnation? Some wise and good men have thought so; but we cannot receive their opinion. Predestination sets aside the necessity of a general judgment, and totally destroys every idea of rewards and punishments. For how can God judge men for what he foreordained? How can he either reward or punish those who acted in all things by irresistible necessity? Heaven, no doubt, was prepared for the saints on the right-hand; but it does not follow that it was not prepared for sinners on the left. If there be any truth in the word of God, it was prepared for *all*; and had all used the appointed means, not one of the human race would have been banished into hell. Hell was not prepared for man; but for the ~~de~~vil and his angels.

We should often meditate upon that glorious kingdom. Every thing that a good man desires will be found there in perfection. Let us set our affections upon things above; and amidst all other necessary cares, let us be most careful to find our way to heaven. Many of our friends are gone before, and are now with Christ in heaven. They wait to welcome us to those happy regions. Let us not trifle in the way; but press forward with all our might. Our sufferings will soon end; and glory will soon begin.

Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. 1 Tim. i. 17. Amen.

FINIS.

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